

The Origins of Maltese Statehood

**A CASE STUDY OF DECOLONIZATION
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**



Henry Frendo

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Decolonization in the Mediterranean

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TO THE FOUNDING FATHERS
OF MALTESE STATEHOOD



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Table of Contents

1	Foreword by His Excellency the President of Malta, Professor Guido de Marco	7
2	Author's Preface: TESTIMONY FROM THE DOCUMENTS	13
3	Towards the 1960s: A LAND AND A PEOPLE IN HISTORY	25

PART I: THE NEGOTIATIONS

4	Silver Collection and Silver Lining: THE DEMAND FOR INDEPENDENCE	35
5	Settling Scores: A NEW AGENDA	100
6	Testing the Terrain: DUNCAN SANDYS VISITS	127
7	Marlborough House: A CONSTITUTION IN THE FORGE	150
8	Breaking the Deadlock: POLITICS, TRADITION AND HUMAN RIGHTS	177
9	Referendum Strategy: THE CONSTITUTION OR INDEPENDENCE?	210

10	Enter the Mediators: THE CHURCH QUESTION	265
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PART II: OPTIONS AND PROSPECTS

11	Red Carpet and Red Herring: THE PROSPECTS FOR AN AMERICAN BASE	293
12	<i>Oltre Mare</i> : THE ITALIAN OPTION	327
13	The Push to Diversify the Economy: INDUSTRY, TOURISM, EMIGRATION	371
14	The Mintoff Factor: A <i>COUP D'ÉTAT</i> IN THE OFFING?	406
15	Second Thoughts: MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY AND THE SOUTHERN FLANK	494

PART III: INDEPENDENCE

16	Clinching a Deal: DEFENCE, FINANCE AND DELIVERANCE	559
17	Twilight to Dawn: HOPES AND FEARS ON THE APPOINTED DAY	640
	Bibliography	693
	Index	707

Foreword

"On behalf of the Government and the People of Malta I have the honour to invoke for my Country the right to be an independent state. I request you therefore to fix as a matter of urgency a date for the Maltese Islands' independence within the Commonwealth."

With this letter, dated 20th August 1962 addressed to Duncan Sandys, then Colonial Secretary, Prime Minister Gorg Borg Olivier started the formal process which led in two years' time to Malta becoming independent.

It was a process which had long started as an ideal; it was the nationhood concept of Malta, existing since when we were a Roman *municipium*, realising itself in the uprising against Monroy under Spanish domination, asserting itself as a sovereign entity with the Order of St John, realising itself in the revolt and victory over the French occupation between 1798 and 1800; the Maltese then aimed at national independence under the protection of Great Britain, only to be dispossessed by the imposition of colonial rule by the "protecting power" putting an end to "*Melitensium amor*" and substituting thereto military occupation by cession.

The Maltese people sought their independence mainly through political action and except for the *Sette Giugno* events ending in bloodshed and death and which expressed the exasperation of people long-suffering and long-used; the way to self-government

and eventual sovereignty was led through the decades by historical figures such as Mitrovich and Camillo Sceberras, Fortunato Mizzi, founder of the Nationalist Party, Manuel Dimech with his *Bandiera tal-Maltin*, Sir Ugo Mifsud and Enrico Mizzi.

In 1932 the Nationalist government demanded, for Malta, Dominion status on the basis of the Statute of Westminster. In 1955 the then rising star of Maltese politics, Dom Mintoff, swung the pendulum in favour of integration with Britain, re-swinging later for independence. The so-called "Break with Britain Resolution" proposed by Mintoff, was immediately seconded by Borg Olivier in the Legislative Assembly in December 1957 and thus ensured the definite burial of the integration proposal.

Malta owes a lot to some of its politicians. In this book Prof. Frendo has rendered a service not only to history but also to the realisation that Malta has been served well by many who sought in politics to serve their country. We have reached a standard of living and a quality of life among the highest in the Mediterranean region. We have exploited our geographic position, we have taken important initiatives both at Helsinki I and Helsinki II, we have given to the Mediterranean dimension full significance in our foreign policy. At the United Nations we have contributed seminal ideas on the Common Heritage of Mankind concept as well as on reforms to the United Nations. We hope to seek convergence on our road to Europe. We have made full use of our independence.

We can understand today's achievement through this exceptional book, recalling the pains and agony of the rundown of the Services, the mass migration to Australia and Canada, the meagre financial assistance offered to Malta by Britain which Borg Olivier disdained in a phrase which became famous: "I have not come here to make a silver collection."

Prof. Frendo reveals the *dramatis personae* of the sixties in Malta's political scene: Toni Pellegrini, turbulent and precipitous, Herbert Ganado a nationalist and a firm believer in Christian social doctrine but fearing an Independent Malta with Mintoff in Government.

Mabel Strickland always a believer in Malta's dependence on Britain but accepting Independence once achieved. Mintoff is certainly in a class of his own. His dynamism and creativity are only matched by his style, difficult, abrasive and populist, one of the best negotiators in the international scene, yet neglecting himself any diplomatic touch; he sought difficult positions and far from waiting for the maturity of time, provoking the time factor in advancing causes in which he firmly believed. In a way he contrasted and complemented Borg Olivier. Borg Olivier was cautious in his approaches, diplomatic in his statements, yet determined and solid as a rock once he reached a decision. He was careful not to make enemies but never at the expense of the dignity of his country. He had an almost physical love for Malta. Borg Olivier was never given to clericalism, maintaining a distance yet never neglecting any support from the Church; he was not a doctrinaire but in his pragmatism had an instinctive understanding for the common man. Indeed, he felt a very common man himself. He used to tell me that he never regarded himself to be particularly intelligent but made it a habit to listen to others and after listening to others he built his own conclusions.

I knew personally and to a certain extent worked with all the *dramatis personae* involved. I had a personal liking for Herbert Ganado and his *humanitas*. Anyone reading "*Rajt Malta Tinbidel*", a classic for all times on Malta's social history, can understand the *humanitas* of Herbert. I followed him in his commitment to a welfare society built on social legislation inspired by Christian social doctrine. But he disappointed me tremendously by not believing in Independence. On resigning from the splinter Democratic Nationalist Party I informed him that his negative stand on Independence was neither democratic still less nationalist. I then took an active part in the independence referendum campaign organised by the Nationalist Party addressing public meetings and conferences in different parts of the island.

I never felt any kindred spirit with Toni Pellegrini. I disagreed with him on what I considered his superficial approach on fundamental issues and the rough style in expressing himself.

At the time referred to in Prof. Frendo's book, I knew Mabel Strickland mainly from afar. She was dedicated to the cause of the Empire and for Malta as a self-governing colony within the Commonwealth. My own politics were completely alien to hers. In the course of time I got to know her very well indeed, primarily as her legal adviser. She was a formidable woman, very pragmatic; despite her political beliefs, once Independence was achieved she made it a point to ensure that her papers would uphold Malta's Independence as a democracy within a European and Commonwealth context.

Another key factor was Archbishop Gonzi. He was certainly moulded in the "Prince – Bishop" cast. He was an ecclesiastic reflecting a pre-*Aggiornamento* Church. He also knew how to fight for a cause and how to mobilise the forces of the "Militant" Church. Even in those times I considered the infliction of the interdict as unwise and excessive. In Archbishop Gonzi, Mintoff found his match. Both were born leaders. Both discarded the art of compromise. Both generated followers who firmly believed in them, but on reflection and with the advantage of time I believe that the extremes of the 1960's and indeed of the early 1970's could have been avoided had the transition to Independence been made on a consensual and national basis without a "religious" conflict added thereto. In this context one cannot but admire the style and substance of Borg Olivier's politics and policies. He exploited to his party's advantage the Mintoff - Gonzi conflict, made the British Government understand that it was only his Government that could ensure an Independent Malta within a Western European context. Duncan Sandys realised that with Borg Olivier one could reach a gentleman's agreement. The Maltese people, even those reluctant for Independence, sensed that Malta's future was in an Independent Malta and found in Borg Olivier's proposal for an Independent Malta with a Monarchical system and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth as Queen of Malta together with a defence agreement and a financial treaty with Great Britain for a ten-year term, as providing that political stability and security that Malta needed for its first decade of independence.

I think that Borg Olivier's foresight rested mainly on his correct reading of Malta's aspirations within a context of continuity.

It has to be said to the credit of Mr Mintoff and of the Malta Labour Party that their support for Independence was a determining factor in Borg Olivier's manoeuvring with the British government.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the author of this book for making many of us re-live yesterday; for teaching the present generation, especially those born since Independence how difficult and humiliating it was to live as a colony. To coming generations Prof. Frendo has shown the contribution made by many Maltese politicians to the constitutional development and welfare of the Maltese Islands. In particular this book brings out the diplomatic skills, the perseverance and the strong belief in the Maltese people which Borg Olivier displayed in the difficult years leading to Independence, making him indeed *Missier Malta Indipendenti*.

Some may want to know yesterday to understand tomorrow; because history is not a chronology of events, history is the making of a people in its political, economic and social evolution.

Sometimes in going through the history of our people through the centuries, we realise that we are living today as an Independent State, sovereign as a people, free to join regional and other entities, mainly thanks to the contribution of those who dedicated themselves to serve their fellow countrymen through politics. One may disagree with several or indeed most of these politicians, yet they all contributed to a dialogue as a result of which the Maltese people built their future.

Generations of Maltese were denied the right to be masters in their country, to decide who is to govern their land; for many it was a distant distant dream that Malta would one day be independent. We are depositories of such a dream. For the dream has come true.

Prof. Frendo has, through his research, helped us understand the circumstances under which the Maltese politicians had to work themselves through, to make a reality of a dream. It is up to us and to future generations to live the reality of this dream.

GUIDO DE MARCO
President of Malta

Author's Preface

TESTIMONY FROM THE DOCUMENTS

This work seeks to paint and to frame a picture of how Maltese statehood originated in the early nineteen sixties, what was going on behind the scenes. It does this mainly, and for the first time, through the voluminous original correspondence recently released in the expertly organized and managed British archives in London. By far the most important series for our purpose is CO926, which has now become accessible after more than thirty years. Containing scores of volumes, this deals mainly with Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Office affairs. Several documents were misplaced, taken out or simply destroyed under statute or otherwise and are today unavailable, but originals or copies of the more important exchanges between the various officials from different departments and ministries almost invariably found their way into the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Office archival circuit.¹ CO926 constitutes

¹ The Dominions Office became the C.R.O. in 1947; this was merged with the Foreign Office in 1969. The C.O. was abolished in 1967.

thus a comprehensive and revealing corpus of documentary evidence. From it, these sinews of thread have been largely woven in a modest attempt to throw some further light on what, for Malta and her people, was undoubtedly a significant parting of the ways, a stepping out into the world. What was going on behind the scenes and on the sidelines, why things happened or not, why these happened in one way and not in another, is brought into focus.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies and Commonwealth Relations, who was most directly concerned with Maltese affairs at this time, was Mr Duncan Sandys. He replaced Mr Reginald Maudling in mid-July 1962, Maudling having in turn substituted the longer-lasting Iain Macleod. Four months earlier in 1962, Lord Lansdowne had replaced Lord Perth as the Minister of State responsible for much the same domain, after Perth had served in that capacity for six years, ever since Malta's 'Integration' phase. Mr Harold Macmillan, who had headed this Conservative administration since 1957, resigned and in October 1963 he was succeeded as Prime Minister by Sir Alec Douglas-Home. In that leadership contest, Douglas-Home unexpectedly and narrowly beat the Deputy Prime Minister Mr R. A. Butler, who however replaced him as the Foreign Secretary. The Minister of Defence (redesignated Secretary of State for Defence from April 1964) was Major Peter Thorneycroft. When Mr Hugh Gaitskell passed away in 1963 he was succeeded as leader of the British Labour Party and as Leader of the Opposition by Mr Harold Wilson (who then became Prime Minister in October 1964).

Other figures who played a significant role in the decision-making processes regarding Malta, as they emerge from this documentation, were the Defence Chiefs of Staff, that is the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, including the Heads of these Services stationed in Malta. The Defence Chiefs of Staff reported to Earl Mountbatten of Burma, who was Chief of the Defence Staff between 1959 and 1965. A war hero linked to the royal family, Mountbatten knew Malta and the Mediterranean like the back of his hand, having served there for six years first as Commander of the First Squadron, Mediterranean, then as Admiral and Commander in Chief, Mediterranean, as well as NATO's Allied Commander in Chief in the

Mediterranean, before becoming First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff in 1955.²

Other protagonists on the British side were the Governor of the Colony, Sir Maurice Dorman who (not unlike Mountbatten in India in 1947) would become her first Governor-General in 1964; and Sir Edward Wakefield, who occupied the newly-created Office of UK Commissioner in Malta under the 1961 Constitution, which had been introduced on lines recommended by Sir Hilary Blood.

On the Maltese side, the main *dramatis personae* were Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier, Prime Minister and, since 1950, Leader of the Nationalist Party; Mr Dominic Mintoff, Leader of the Opposition and, since 1949, of the Malta Labour Party; and Archbishop Sir Michael Gonzi, who had served in the early 1920s as a Labour Party Senator and as private secretary to Archbishop Maurus Caruana whom he succeeded in 1943, after having been Bishop of Gozo for 19 years. In addition to these three, there were the smaller 'Church' or 'Centre' parties represented in parliament. These were the Christian Workers, Democratic Nationalists and Progressive Constitutionals, led respectively by Mr Anthony Pellegrini, Dr Herbert Ganado and Miss Mabel Strickland. There were also Cabinet Ministers, especially Borg Olivier's number two man in the administration Dr Giovanni Felice; and Malta Government officials acting in different capacities, some more committed than others, who gave valuable service to the Maltese administration and to Malta at this determining juncture in her history.

² Meddling in Maltese politics was not unknown to Mountbatten either. He is reputed to have had a disagreement with Borg Olivier's administration in the mid-1950s when Borg Olivier insisted that Service goods including polo horses were obliged to pay customs duty. Mountbatten prided himself on having called Mr John Cole, one of Borg Olivier's Coalition Ministers who later emigrated to Australia, and encouraged him to cross the floor, thus toppling the administration, and leading to Mintoff's first premiership in 1955, when 'Integration' was very much on the cards. Mountbatten confessed this in person over dinner while aboard ship to Mr John A. Mizzi, then a serving journalist with the Strickland press and a stringer for *The Daily Telegraph*. Mizzi/Frendo interview, July 1999.



Left: Sir Edward Wakefield, who became the UK Commissioner in Malta under the 1961 'Blood' Constitution, and later the first UK High Commissioner accredited to Malta, coordinated the top secret monthly intelligence reports by a "Local Committee" between 1962 and 1964. Right: Sir Maurice Dorman, Malta's last Governor and later her first Governor-General, chaired various bodies including, under the 1961 Constitution, the Malta Joint Consultative Council, on which the Prime Minister also sat.

Trade unions, especially the General Workers Union led by Mr Joe Attard Kingswell, were directly concerned because of the Services run-down. The Malta Police Force, led by Commissioner Vivian de Gray, was instrumental in more ways than met the eye. There were experts and advisers from overseas, such as Dr Wolfgang Stolper from the United Nations, an economist, and his team; and the Attorney-General's Office headed by a constitutional lawyer, Professor J. J. Cremona. The resident Italian and American consular representatives, Signor Onofrio Messina and Mr Harrison Lewis, kept a close watch on things. Last but certainly not least, there were the parliaments and the publics of the two countries, and the ways in which these expressed themselves especially at given moments.

While trying to find, sift, relate and collate the copious documentary

materials without losing the reader - in such a way that, so far as possible, the events and the topics may be seen to speak for themselves - the interpretation has sought to be as faithful as possible to the actual happenings and to the main themes identified. There were the long, tortuous and sometimes tricky negotiations for Independence, which lasted more than two years, and which seemed like an eternity. These revolved mainly around constitutional issues, defence matters and financial aid. There were other underlying options and prospects which loomed ahead, at least potentially, involving other powers and concerns. Finally the strings were tied up. In spite of the odds, Independence for Malta was made to happen.

By its very nature a pioneering and hopefully seminal work, this history thus looks at the emergence of a new state from colonial tutelage; at the transformation of a onetime strategic fortress and outpost of empire into a democratic and basically sovereign nation; at the challenge of viability, integrity and survival for a small island in the central Mediterranean, on the southern shores of Europe, caught for many years in the hold of one domination after another. It is almost as much a history of Britain, in some respects, as it is a history of Malta over the time covered - with disengagement, Britain's lingering role in the Mediterranean, the Near and Middle East, decolonization, and the unfolding Commonwealth, as a general background to it. The period focussed on - about four years from 1961 to 1964 - may seem like a very short time, but in terms of historical 'duration' it is as long and varied as it is complex and formative, a veritable X-Ray of Malta past, present and future.

To change, to adapt, to survive and to better one's life, have been and are primary human concerns, for which *political* decisions of every kind and form are necessary all the time. To study these frontally in evolving national, institutional or ideological contexts is essential for self-understanding in any context. Whether "from above" or "from below" - to use a somewhat fashionable and, for the diplomatic and political historian, possibly off-putting phraseology - there are myriad elements to be investigated in the human condition and experience, whether individual or collective, national,

regional or global, all of which can rightfully be studied and highlighted in time, not necessarily historically. Any suggestion that good history is "history without the politics in it" must be taken as simply a badly-worded call to impartiality. The emptying of politics from history would deprive the historical discipline of what has been and is perhaps the overriding drive in mankind: the power to do and change things according to new needs, perceptions and aspirations as these arise. Depending on the nature of the subject treated, and the sources available for its study, a history will be prompted to draw its own conclusions on the basis of the evidence available for it at the time of writing. *The Origins of Maltese Statehood* does not pretend to do anything more than this. Documents alone do not make history, certainly; but there can hardly be a lasting history without documents. Documents of one category or another impose their own constraints. In the sixties, Robinson and Gallagher spoke of "the official mind" in their readings of how British imperialism stumbled across Africa from one country to another, marking boundaries for purposes of politics and strategy. In a more recent complementary work by Cain and Hopkins using another bundle of documents and another set of lenses, it turns out that financial and business interests in the City were driving that movement forward through other pressures. In our case here, in the early 1960s we have a general stock-taking of what Malta meant and how it could survive. Personalities and individuals also matter. The motor is essentially a political and prescriptive one - what to do, and how best to do it - but in the process, just about everything gets thrown on the table: from emigration to tourism, from the dockyard to the Royal Malta Artillery, and from the opera house to the university.

The ensuing revelations, implications and deductions are meant to be dynamic not static, and inquisitive: illuminating the lived present as much as the recent past. As generations move on, and the child fathers the man, new approaches are bound to arise, if only because new evidence becomes available. Likewise trapped in time - which remains the ultimate arbiter - *arrivistes* will take issue with predecessors. History as it really happened may be a great ideal to aspire to, but one which can never be fully attained, and if based on dehydrated facts it would be a boring and rather useless exercise

anyway, because not to interpret is to die. However “wholistic” an historian may wish to be, the best one could do in any study of the particular is remain open to the inter-related, the multi-faceted, if possible positing alternative scenarios and contexts, perhaps indicating comparisons in time and space, trying to make sense of the materials by ordering coherent lines of sustained empirical argument - not, of course, narrating blandly as in a chronicle or in a vacuum. By its self-imposed constraints, this exercise sets one wide angle and zooms in to focus on a series of related aspects through the viewfinder, some of them beneath the surface. To venture further beyond place and time or delve deeper for an elusive “totality” would be reminiscent of a Latin quip once cited in the Council of Government in a debate on language and education by the founding-father of the Maltese nationalist movement Dr Fortunato Mizzi (d. 1905): “something of everything, nothing of anything.” There are copious references here to Cyprus, Egypt and Gibraltar; to Cuba, British Guiana and Zanzibar; to Italy and the Holy See, NATO and the USA. Of course there can be a measure of otherness and of universality accompanying immediacy or specificity, that is implicit in human behavior anywhere; but not to miss the wood for the trees is as important as not missing the trees for the wood. As Frantz Fanon put it in 1952: “I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal.” *Negritude* was its own follower: “My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It is.”³

The Maltese consciousness was emphatically Catholic by religion, largely Semitic by language, European by history in a *continuum* since the twelfth century, survivalist and economically dependent with strokes and touches of the British Empire set against Mediterranean hues, insular and cosmopolitan; but it was above all Maltese, hence its uniqueness. So too was Malta’s path to decolonization and statehood a particular case, however comparable it may be to similar paths elsewhere around the globe. Admittedly,

³ F. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*; but see ch. 5, “Independence”, Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 180-222.

history writing in Malta, where history was not fully taught as a discipline at university before the 1950s, and specialization in it was later interrupted for a decade, remained quite subjected to the particularistic and antiquarian, the eulogistic and sentimental, with doses of paternalism and finality heaped upon it (mingled now with tourist colour *brochures* and coffee table extravaganzas). That was partly why *Storja* was started as an annual digest by the University of Malta's History Society in 1978, with an emphasis on "extracting meaning".⁴ In the words of Malta's Head of State, who has graciously contributed the Foreword to this work:

Sometimes it is tragic to find Maltese students who know more about the Wars of the Roses than about events which led to their Island's independence; or more about what happened in the Italian *Risorgimento* than how Malta truly lived through that period of the *Risorgimento*, with the roots of nationalism and of an independent Malta during the same period... the notion of liberalism in the true sense of the word 'liberal', the notion of democracy evolving, of a changing world in which Malta is a participant of change...⁵

Let us therefore begin to find, to elevate and to examine the documents and the memories, tracing the fingerprints and the footsteps, to fork out some discernible pathways which, in the case before us, lead demonstrably to the present, not to discard what may be "contemporary" in the best senses originally intended by great thinkers like Vico, Michelet, Croce and others. Let us try to re-evoke a lived and a shared past in nation building (as well as in the shedding of empire), to come to grips with what it has meant and means, inducing the reader to re-live or at least to see those times,

⁴ See the mission statement on the inside front cover of the first number: "Storja: A Commitment to Historical Learning", *Storja* 78.

⁵ See this writer's interview with President de Marco, *The Sunday Times*, Valletta, Part 2, 13 June 1999, under "History, identity and our future", p. 47.

such as they were - if possible without tinted spectacles. That still remains a very formidable task, not easily realisable, and never permanently or ultimately so. Much has already been buried or simplistically pigeon-holed in sheer politico-religious and party political controversy in recent decades - taking an EU-aspiring Malta to the brink of now having five national feasts but no National Day as such.⁶ Slowly, that may be changing, and about time too; mentalities and party leaderships change over time, visions of past and future evolve. As new evidence and interpretations become available, a national post-colonial historical consciousness, reconciliation and pragmatism may indeed mature.

Wherever possible, documentary evidence here has been supplemented and moderated by oral history. This writer has been interviewing Maltese people (as well as many non-Maltese ones) from all walks of life, not only politicians, since his undergraduate days in 1967-1968; many of these have sadly passed away but their memories and impressions have been somehow preserved. Interviewees have also included Mr Mintoff, Archbishop Gonzi (d.1984) and Dr Borg Olivier (d.1980), as well as, among others, the late police commissioner Vivian de Gray, the late minister Dr Carmelo Caruana, Dr Victor Ragonesi, Professor J. J. Cremona, Joe Attard Kingswell, and several others, who were actively involved in Maltese public life in the early 1960s. Some of them are acknowledged in the bibliography. I heartily thank all those named and un-named who have informed, instructed and inspired me; there are many to be grateful to - activists, thinkers, writers, fellow travellers, critics - for their help and inspiration in the course of multifold pursuits in life when facts, experiences and views have been aired and shared, not always with any specific aim in view.

⁶ In a gesture of reconciliation after what seemed like Mintoff's attempts to wipe Independence Day off the Maltese calendar after 1971, when a Nationalist administration was returned in 1987 parliament agreed to have five national feasts recording different historical events of varying importance: 8th September, 21st September, 7th June, 13th December and 31st March.

Unfortunately very few of those who were then involved, somehow or other, have sat down to record their memories. Autobiographies and biographies in Malta have been somewhat scarce so far, or else their authors too reluctant to penetrate the substance, perhaps out of deference to their subjects or the fear of ruffling feathers. Moreover the times spoken of are still quite recent, almost too recent. They are well within the living memory of many older people in Malta as in Britain and elsewhere; some of these may well have pockets of information and a residual wisdom still awaiting utterance. That indeed would be most helpful in the event of a second edition. Sir Arturo Mercieca (d.1969), the jurist-deportee who continued to be prolific, and whose *Le Mie Vicende* remains a useful autobiography, managed to slot in an emotional reference to independence on the last page, in the last paragraph of its English translation. In the early 1960s, engaged Maltese intellectuals were conspicuous by their absence; practically all the space was monopolized by politicians and ecclesiastics, their assistants and followers. Of such pertinent published recollections as exist, volume four of *Rajt Malta Timbidel* by Dr Herbert Ganado (d.1979), and the first two chapters of Dr Edgar Mizzi's more recent memoirs, have been helpful; references to them are duly acknowledged in the usual way. There is also a three volume biography of Archbishop Gonzi, the second volume of which is of some relevance, and some other generic biographical material mostly in Maltese.

My thanks go in the first place to the then Chairman of APS Bank, Chev. Alfred P. Farrugia, whose idea it was six years ago that I write a book about how Malta became independent. I wish sincerely to express my gratitude to him and to the Directors of APS Bank for their entire trust and ready encouragement by way of a research sponsorship. That was supplemented by whatever else was available for research purposes from university funding schemes, and otherwise.⁷ I would also like to thank the staffs of archives and

⁷ My earlier book *Malta's Quest for Independence; Reflections on the Course of Maltese History*, written at the invitation of the publisher Anton Dougall with a brief to produce a general, popular, 'non-academic' account from prehistory to the present,

libraries where I have mostly worked, especially the Public Record Office in London; the Cambridge University Library particularly while I was a Visiting Fellow in Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1996; the Bodleian in Oxford, especially Rhodes House; the La Trobe and Augsburg university libraries in Australia and Germany from where I had obtained relevant secondary data while I taught there; the University of Malta Library especially the staff in the reference and Melitensia sections; and the staffs at the Santo Spirito archives and the Bibliotecha, where the archivist Ms Hella-Jean Bartolo kindly and obligingly volunteered to assist with the retrieval, photocopying and discussion of some of the documentation once a complete draft of the text began nearing completion. The staff at the Department of Information's photolibrary in Valletta were most helpful and kind, as were those at the Union Press, Dar Ċentrali and GWU libraries. I sincerely thank them for their assistance and, in the case of the DOI and the Union Press, for several photographs they lent me, or developed or reproduced for me. Sadly Malta's best photolibrary has been lost forever to posterity as a result of the gutting of the Progress

is now ten years old; it spans a much longer gamut, and it could not of course draw upon the primary sources relating to the early 1960s which were then inaccessible. *Maltese Political Development, 1798-1964*, written for the Ministry of Education and Human Resources in 1993, is very much a *documentary* history; it has the advantage of complementing this present work through various annotated textual documents such as parliamentary speeches covering the 1950s and 1960s until Malta's membership of the Council of Europe. An earlier work, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, first published by Midsea in 1979, with a second edition by the same publisher in 1991 and a third envisaged soon, is complementary as a background and stimulus to *The Origins of Maltese Statehood*, especially on the formation of Maltese political parties from the 1870s, but as a detailed account it stops in the early 1920s. The 1920s and 1930s have been fairly thoroughly researched from Italian, British and American primary sources, mainly through research funding from La Trobe University, Melbourne; but unfortunately due to other commitments, and deprived of any research assistance, I have so far not had the time and the opportunity to conclude an intended, much-needed two volume history of Malta between the Wars. There is a gap in Maltese scholarship here - the inter-war period, still under-researched and rather misunderstood, is rich socially and culturally in its dialectical texture of fascism, colonialism and democracy, and a time when Malta first requested Dominion Status (1932).

Press building in Valletta during a 'political demonstration' on Monday, 15th October 1979.

My thanks go to my wife Margaret for her patience and encouragement over the years, as well as our children Juliana, Benjamin and Oliver, for moral support and not least for their help with the computer whenever I got stuck. In this respect, I also want to thank the support staff at the University of Malta's Computer Services Centre, the Work Resources Programme, and Ms Annabelle Borg at the office. The Italian Ambassador, the British High Commissioner as well as the directors of the American Centre and of the Italian Cultural Institute, Mr John A. Mizzi, a veteran journalist, and Dr Alberto Bin from NATO Headquarters, Brussels, provided some useful contact addresses, suggestions and, in the latter case, copies of materials which are just now being declassified, while the Office of the Prime Minister had given me access to some archival materials at Castille for an earlier related work, some of which I have drawn upon here. Mr Mizzi, Professor Cremona, Major E.J. Axisa, Dr Ragonesi and others have kindly supplied me with copies of original manuscripts or original photographs from their private archives. Their cooperation and support are heartily acknowledged. Mr Lino Spiteri, Mr John Mizzi, Professor Joe Friggieri, Ms Hella-Jean Bartolo and, at my insistence, Chev. Alfred Farrugia, have read and most helpfully commented upon my draft MS or parts thereof: to them all I owe a debt of gratitude. Naturally I am solely reponsible for any errors of commission or omission.

HENRY FREND

15th August 1999

Towards the 1960s

A LAND AND A PEOPLE IN HISTORY

Throughout their long and chequered history, Maltese had sought degrees of manageable freedom. They sometimes dreamt of independence but hardly of a complete one - if that were possible.

Since ancient times, the islanders had developed a sense of belonging to their territory: their fields, shores and families. Gradually, this affinity evolved into one of land and people. Already in the Middle Ages, we find marked traces of a sense of in-group feeling, which could roughly be translated into that of an *ethnie*, if not a *patrie*. Succeeding generations of islanders held together by bonds of blood - kith and kin in a defined space - were obliged to seek nourishment and shelter, sometimes to unite in self-defence. For countless years, these inhabitants often lived in fear, striving to protect their lives and possessions against marauding intruders: the hated Saracens searching for spoils, for slave oarsmen responsive to the lash of the whip, docile servant-bearers to be shipped off to a harem or a market place. Subjected to the law of the powerful, they faced avaricious exploiters: feudal lords and their fiscal mercenaries drawing blood out of the stone with unilateral abandon.

Small, dependent and defenceless, protected by the sea to which they were exposed, by the winding alleys of settlement clusters in the interior stretching to the tops of hills, they sought to secure a limited freedom, the right to live with some *amour propre*. This was generally their best 'bargain chip', not unlike the dream of a freed slave whose onetime master gave him food and shelter. On the one hand, they needed to belong to a larger whole, to be somehow 'a part of something', of one empire or another: Rome, Palermo, Barcelona, Madrid, Paris... At the same time, they seemed to want nothing better than to enjoy as much autonomy as they could muster in the regulation of their internal affairs, without foreign interference. Put differently, they needed a protector, but then they would much rather be allowed to do as they pleased - having put down anchor, they would man their boat. They wanted to be a *municipium*, with or without a Roman governor *in situ*. They wanted the right directly to petition the sovereign beyond the seas, and a promise never again to be leased out as a fief to whichever lord. They needed solace and assurance at home, in their groping for survival. The food - material and spiritual - came from the *terra ferma* closest to them. It came in the form of grain and victuals; it also came in the guise of cassock and cloth. As the Roman Catholic Church established itself amongst them since the earliest times, especially from the Later Middle Ages onwards, they generally clung to it, as a child does to a mother. The Muslim Moor, whose language - sometimes linking the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean - they largely spoke, became 'the other'.

With the coming of the Order of St John, Malta was once again a fief, contrary to the emperor's earlier assurance in 1428; but so circumstance obliged. As these Maltese were to find out time and again, *imperium-insula* undertakings tended to be one-sided pacts, or perhaps just wishful thinking on the islanders' part. For so long as strength came to be measured by superior stealth, such has been the fate of the weak in relation to the strong. As chanted in many a ballad, they might have recourse to brawn and muscle in hand-to-hand skirmishes - sword or dagger, fire or flight to the rescue. But there was nothing much beyond that, except *in extremis*, as in 1428; and in 1775; and in 1798.

Having been assuaged, and 'legally' empowered to take up arms - *manu forti* - in defence of their rights by no other than the Spanish Emperor himself in the Late Middle Ages, what could they now do in practice? They could at best raise their arms to heaven in prayer or despair, for other arms they hardly had, and might not have known much how to use them if they did. There was no battlefield over which to fight. It was under the Order's rule from the 16th to the 18th century that the Maltese perfected corsairing, in the fight against the infidel - and for booty - at sea.

Times changed, of course. Revolution having visited the New World, it ventured into the Old. Apple carts were upset. Challenging ideas were expressed, mostly by means of the written word... and the warring troops on land and sea. Thus divulged, the ideas spread. The timid made bold. The poor were no longer ashamed. The *patrie*, after all, was theirs. They could become "citizens". Their rights were "inalienable" - not in anyone's gift, like bracelets in a dowry. There should no longer be imprisonment without trial, nor a special tax on salt; or on tea.

For the Maltese, history was a little more complex. Their new lords became themselves their main providers, to some extent even their captive clients. The urge for freedom therefore could not be quite identified with that for bread. Maltese may not always have been allowed to hunt for rabbit, but generally speaking they were free to keep body and soul together. There was generally no starvation: what was more, the new 'feudal' lord invested in hospitals and orphanages. Nor was that simple charity: it was Holy Religion. In the name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Malta became 'a fief of the Lord'. There were occasional periods when tyranny and hardship joined hands; and it was on such occasions, as in 1775, that stirrings of freedom came briefly and bloodily to the fore. We even find reference to 'a Maltese banner' planted by the good rebels on St James Cavalier at the entrance to Valletta in that attempted rising. Still, it didn't work. Freedom was desired from oppression, perhaps from want; but freedom by whom, to what end, and how?

Malta was jolted into a genre of 'theoretical' freedom with the advent

of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. The French had some Maltese partisans, mostly intellectuals of sorts who were fed up with the Order's archaic hegemony. The Order of St John represented everything which the French Revolution had battled against: the aristocracy, the church, the inquisition, despotism, wealth and privilege. Liberators spoke with a silver tongue. As elsewhere, they implanted the vocabulary of freedom, but without actually delivering it. In so doing, they provoked a popular armed insurrection. This was not a *jacquerie*, nor a sporadic outburst: it went on for two years, thousands died. Malta had seen neither so much misery nor so much fervour since the Great Siege of 1565, when in a classic Cross against Crescent encounter the Ottoman Empire had valiantly tried to conquer her.

Deliverance was at hand, or so it seemed, when the British Navy blockaded the French and starved them out. Sadly for the Maltese insurgents, that blockade was inefficient on the day when it probably mattered most to them. On the night of 11th January 1799, the taking of Valletta was swept into disarray by French celebrations to welcome the safe arrival of a succouring Genoese ship. The French eventually left with full military honours, having surrendered to the British. Licking their wounds, the Maltese were still at the gates in 1800. When it came finally to deciding their own fate, at the most auspicious moment of all where it really mattered, after a bloody long drawn out struggle which had drained them of just about everything they had possessed, there they were, out on the doorstep, waiting for the next decree from on high. As their 'chief', they had selected an Englishman (Captain Ball), who at this point was also swept aside and possibly double crossed by another Englishman (Major-General Pigot).

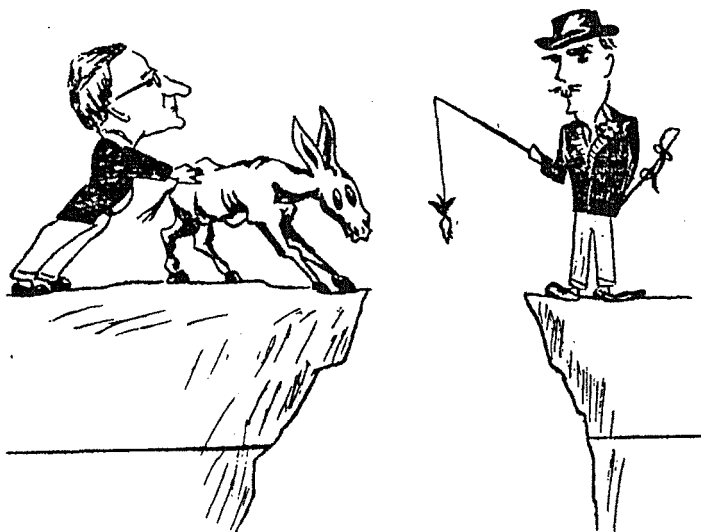
All this, by way of background and introduction, is to give inkling as to what independence would have meant to a people such as this. Not only had independence been elusive, it seemed almost impossible. Domination was resented, independence perhaps feared, and freedom probably confused with tradition. There was a conceptual and juridical swash at emancipation in that courageous, eloquent and seminal *Dichiarazione dei diritti degli abitanti di Malta*

e Gozo of 15th June 1802, particularly in one turn of phrase where the very word 'indipendenza' was used, to argue that if the British decided to leave they had no right to cede Malta to any other power. (Except, possibly, Naples, to which Malta supposedly belonged *de jure*; but by 1802 even that was not so clear any more.)

The British vocabulary of freedom was less extravagant than the French, but in the course of time some doses of it saw an application on the ground. It was not handed down liberally, like manna falling from heaven. In fits and starts, an increasingly liberal constitutional framework was gradually set in place. Essential components of a viable democratic freedom, such as an uncensored press and a secret ballot, came about by the mid-nineteenth century, and these more or less survived the test of time. The economy was further transformed, increasingly new jobs took the place of traditional occupations, people changed habitat, and tastes, even languages.

From the propagation of 'nation-inspired' events such as the *Otto Settembre* to the withdrawal in 1903 of Representative Government; from the *Sette Giugno* unrest to the demand for Dominion Status in 1932, followed by the revocation a year later of the Responsible Government obtained in 1921; from the internment and deportations of the early 1940s to the repatriations and then the restitution of Self-Government in 1947 - with a Maltese Labour Party at the helm, for the first time - the rocking Maltese boat gathered ballast and steadied in its onward destination towards 'self-determination'.

As the British disengaged, the Maltese recharged. Yet the paradoxes of the Maltese condition resurfaced again and again. We had Nerik Mizzi before the First World War with his daring suggestion for an autonomous Malta in a federation with Italy; then we had Dom Mintoff after the Second World War with his much more elaborate and popular plan for Malta's integration with Britain. For various reasons, 'integration' fell through: Mintoff may have been too demanding; the Nationalists were dead set against it, as was the local Catholic Church; and the Suez crisis coupled with the fate of Malta's



In this PN cartoon, Mr Mintoff pushes a reluctant donkey towards a carrot held out for it by the British prime minister, Sir Anthony Eden, at the edge of a canyon – meaning Malta's Integration with Britain. Below, Mr Mintoff addresses a GWU conference in 1956 surrounded by Union Jacks.



Royal Dockyard complicated matters still further. The net result in national political development was a convergence of the Nationalist and Labour stand on independence. The 'Break with Britain' resolution in December 1957 was proposed in parliament by the then Prime Minister, Mr Minto, and seconded by the then Leader of the Opposition, Dr Borg Olivier. In a show of unanimity rare to Maltese politics even in matters of national concern, the Maltese Legislative Assembly took up the cudgels with both hands and now was aiming in the same direction: Malta's independence from Britain.

The dockyard's future remained an overriding stumbling block: it was partly on issues related to this problem that Minto resigned in April 1958 and pledged to "govern from the squares", with the slogan "British get out". There was rioting. Malta's 'Responsible Government' constitution came to grief once more. It was under a colonial regime that Malta's first five-year Development Plan was finally launched...

Over the years certain identifiable features remained; in some respects these crystallized and consolidated. One of them was undeniably the march towards nationhood and statehood. 'March' is to use the wrong word: this was no drill, nor even a parade or a *fiesta*. Malta's path to statehood was a halting and a searching one, with potholes, pitfalls and deviations. There were painful moments, grave uncertainties, and many obstacles - survival, strategy and security foremost among them. Many were the worries and fears of Maltese, as well as of Britain and some other countries. Until the last minute, there were doubts, queries and alternatives. There were differences of perception and interest in the balance; there was *machismo*, and there was pique. But there was also a vision and a self-confident perseverance, tenacity and a dynamic creativity, which soon put paid to the worst scenarios of mass destitution, of civil unrest, or indeed of Communist domination. The time had come, finally: here at hand, in the early 1960s, was a truly historic moment unraveling, one on which a homegrown future could rest.

PART I

THE NEGOTIATIONS

Silver Collection and Silver Lining

THE DEMAND FOR INDEPENDENCE

Independence came in 1964, which was a year of great challenge and a new beginning; but the year of decision was really 1962.

In the general elections held in February 1962, 'independence' featured as a general aspiration in the electoral programmes of the main political parties, Nationalist and Labour. No sooner had the Nationalists been returned than Dr Borg Olivier went up to London for talks, first about some amendments to the 1961 constitution, but soon afterwards about economic assistance. He was successful in his first mission, but not in his second. Seeing that no progress was being made in extracting financial aid, he opted for independence from Britain there and then. It is possible that he may have had the demand for independence up his sleeve all along, as a fall-back position or perhaps as a trump card. What seems to have finally provoked it was the British Government's intransigence: they could not offer anything beyond an additional one hundred thousand pounds in aid. That stance provoked Borg Olivier's famous and widely-reported retort that he had not gone to London "to make a silver collection". From his hotel suite at the

Savoy Hotel in London, he had two historic letters sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, demanding independence as a matter of urgency. Shortly afterwards he called a press conference to announce Malta's demand to the world.

The Maltese scenario in 1962 was very much coloured by four main events that had occurred since 1958. First, there was the collapse of the Integration plan and the consequent anti-British riots and clashes in April of that year, for which Mintoﬀ and his party were blamed. On 28th April Governor Laycock prohibited the holding of demonstrations for three months, and two days later declared that "a public emergency" existed in Malta.¹ Responsible Government was suspended and as a result Malta was relegated to a constitutional limbo. This state of affairs was deplored equally by the PN and the MLP, both of which probably believed that they enjoyed majority support among the electorate in 1958/59.

Thirdly, there was the 'politico-religious' dispute, as it was called, with Mr Mintoﬀ and Archbishop Gonzi as its chief protagonists in a mass (and rather hysterical) mobilization of popular forces. Depicted by Mintoﬀ and others in MLP publications (such as *The Struggle* and *Il-Helsien*) as pro-British and anti-worker, the Archbishop was hurt in more ways than one, admonishing the irreverent critics. He was further hurt when during the huge celebrations to commemorate St Paul's shipwreck in 1960 he called at the dockyard with the Papal delegate, Cardinal Muench, and when he started speaking he was booed by workers who then burst out singing the MLP anthem. The reparations Gonzi expected were not forthcoming: following the MLP's participation in an AAPSO executive meeting in Cairo in January 1961, the Lenten Pastoral read in all churches in February denounced Communism and AAPSO with it. In March the MLP held a party conference

¹ Both decrees were published in the *Government Gazette* of the respective dates, 28th and 30th April 1958. The former was done under section 21 of the Public Meetings Ordinance, the latter under the Malta (Emergency Powers) Order in Council, 1953.

defending its position and on 8th April 1961 the Bishops gave “a personal interdict” to all those who had attended it. It was in the course of this, with fire and brimstone promised to MLP leaders and activists, that the MLP elaborated and insisted on its so-called “six points” (*sitt punti*) for a more secular and ideologically open state. In May 1962 there was a fourth crucial development when it became known that the long-planned reductions in British defence spending had suddenly become a harsh reality and they would hit Malta with immediate effect.

Meanwhile Mintoff courted the friendship of Tito and Nasser, and participated in other AAPSO meetings, thereby lending credence to the analogy popularly drawn of him with Fidel Castro. A Cairo-based anti-colonialist Third World grouping imbued with anti-capitalist Marxist rhetoric typical of the time, the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization was a pro-Peking ‘Communist’ front; it was not a mainstream European-inspired democratic socialist body like the Socialist International, which the MLP also joined.² The Maltese Church opposed that too: no Socialists of whatever hue were welcome in Malta. There was a real fear in the minds of many people, lay as much as religious, that under Mintoff’s unrelenting leadership, democracy would risk going down the drain and that, if left to his own devices in an independent state, Malta was likely to become another Cuba: “a Cuba in the Mediterranean”. Such fears, which may have been or seemed exaggerated, may not have been exactly religious nor were they limited to ecclesiastics. Mintoff and his party were not assisted by the aura of upheaval associated

² The MLP denied this mentioning, for example, that President Julius Nyerere, who was hosting the AAPSO conference in Dar-es-Salaam in January 1963, was a Catholic. See “Is-Socjalizmu u l-AAPSO” and “President Kattoliku jistieden lill-AAPSO”, *Il-Helsien*, 14 Dec. 1962, p.1. See also “Dr Buttigieg jaghti l-fatti ezatti tal-Kwitsjoni Pulitico-Religjuza”, *ibid.*, 12 Sept. 1964, p. 1: “...lilna pingewna bhala komunisti. Ghal dan ahna ma stajniex ma nwigbux. U ghax hrigna stqarrija pulitika biex niddefendu rwiehna, ahna l-membri ta’ l-eżekuttiv iddubajna l-interdett.” Founded by the Bandung Conference in 1955, AAPSO became pro-Soviet after 1965 under Nasser’s influence. See F. Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics* (Lond., 1999), p. 111.

with them following their administration and the still vividly-recalled rioting of April 1958, however justified such outbursts might have been regarded, from a populist political viewpoint in a colonial situation, by those who had directly or indirectly instigated them. Several MLP demonstrators including MPs had landed in prison.³

As a result of all that, Malta came to be regarded in London as a likely crisis situation, one in which it was not advisable to hold fresh elections before a state of normality (*sic*) had been restored and better control ascertained. It was Mintoff rather than Borg Olivier who mobilized and galvanized a mass following for Independence from Britain after 1958. His well-oiled political machine was organized with drum-beating and bugle-sounding children's brigades in 'national' uniform marching down the streets, and large pictures of Mintoff with his pipe regularly on the front pages of the party press organs in the style of a leadership cult; the party had its

³ Briefly the 'six points' were these: (1) the separation of church and state; (2) the introduction of civil marriage; (3) a liberal state censorship on European lines; (4) freedom of conscience without any religious preference; (5) no special privileges for the Roman Catholic Church; and (6) the belief that violence need not always be shunned. The MLP's stance during the round table negotiations for independence and later, particularly certain objections to the independence constitution draft, would reverberate with the 'sitt punti' and closely related topics. To get a 'feel' of the times, as that continued to filter down the years, see e.g. the heated exchanges between Mr Mintoff, G. H. Ferro, Page Thirteen and other correspondents about 1958 in *The Sunday Times* (of Malta) as recently as July-Aug. 1989. Ferro accused Mintoff of having betrayed Eden's confidence to Nasser on preparations for the Suez operation in 1956, a charge denied by Mintoff, while Ferro denied Mintoff's claim that British commandos had been used to quell rioting in April 1958. Mintoff quoted from "a scholarly analysis" published by his "parliamentary colleague" Dr Alfred Sant. See D. Mintoff, "Friend to Eden and Nasser", *The Sunday Times*, 30 July 1989, p.33; and G.H. Ferro, "History his way", *ibid.*, 6 Aug. 1989, p.17. For contrasting historical outlines of the ongoing Church-MLP diatribes especially from 1959 onwards, see A. Azzopardi, *Il-Qawmien tal-Haddiem Malti* (Malta, 1986), vol. 2, 1955-1971, esp. pp. 44-88; E.S. Tonna and M. Galea, *L-Arcisqof Gonzi* (Malta, 1982), vol. 2, 1943-1964, esp. pp. 108-126, 139-172; E. Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (Norman, U.S.A. 1967), pp. 211-233.

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TIMES OF MALTA

No. 7,038

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 1958

Price 3d.

MALTA GOVERNMENT RESIGN

People Urged to Remain Calm WARNING AGAINST RUMOURS

Important events took place in Malta yesterday (Monday). In the morning agreed statements were made from the Office of the Prime Minister and from the Press Office of the Archbishop's Palace that relationships have been restored between the Government and the Church. In the evening the Prime Minister broadcast a statement that he was tendering his resignation and the resignation of his Cabinet colleagues to the Governor. Later in the night the Lieutenant Governor broadcast to the people urging them to keep calm and assuring them that the administration would carry on and that public order would be preserved.

His Honour Mr. Trafford Smith broadcast the follow-

ing:—
"As you have heard, this morning the Prime Minister submitted his resignation to His Excellency the Governor. At the same time the other Ministers have submitted their resignations at the same time.
The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues have broken down. Law and order will be maintained. We cannot see beyond that at present.
But I can reassure you that no matter what happens, the Governor will ensure that the administration continues. There will be no breakdown. Law and order will be maintained."

Princess Margaret Opening New Parliament Today

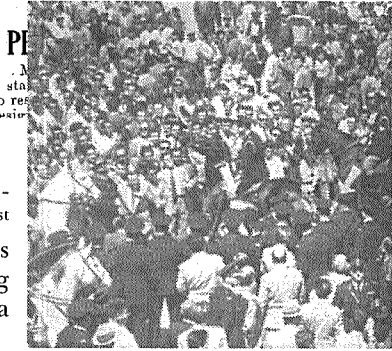
(Reuter's Service)

PORT OF SPAIN, April 21.

Princess Margaret went to bed in Port of Spain early last night after the first day of her West Indies tour.

The Princess arrived by air yesterday in the "Calypso Island". She is to open the first parliament of the Federation of the West Indian Islands tomorrow.

Reports of the Mintoff administration's resignation from office on 21st April 1958 and (inset), on the previous day, cavalry policemen preventing Labour hecklers from disrupting a Nationalist meeting in Qormi.



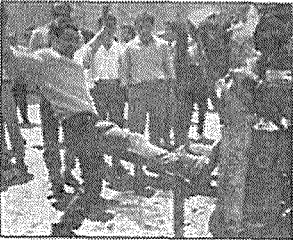
May Day and Battle of Flowers, even its carnivals, song contests and beauty queens. After 1961 the MLP had to combat the church sanctions and an antagonistic hierarchy as much as - if not more than - the onetime pro-Italian Nationalists themselves. Mintoff impressed with his forceful delivery and greater secular-mindedness, not to mention his Oxford pedigree, such as it was; but his posture was increasingly seen as demagogic and unreliable, ideologically erratic and even dangerous.

TIMES OF MALTA

TUESDAY, April 29, 1958



Youngsters at Marsa drop to knock up the Army land rover which was set on fire yesterday by demonstrators.



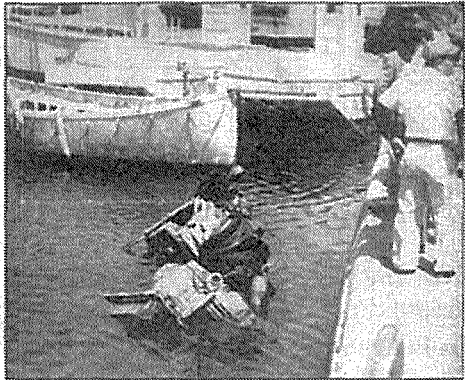
One of the young men ventilates his feelings by kicking the burnt-out wheel of the land-rover at the Marsa.



Applause greets Mr. Mintoff as he drives along Kingway.



A scene at the height of the pitched battle between police and demonstrators at Fawcett this yesterday morning. A squad of policemen crouching up the hill found themselves under a hail of stones. They charged up the hill after the demonstrators, brandishing batons. At one time the police defended themselves by hurling back the stones aimed at them.



The Army land-rover, after being burnt out, is tipped into the sea at Marsa.

THE TIGNE COURT HOTEL
MILITARY, CIVILIAN
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COMPAGNIA GENOVAISE DI ARRETRAMENTO



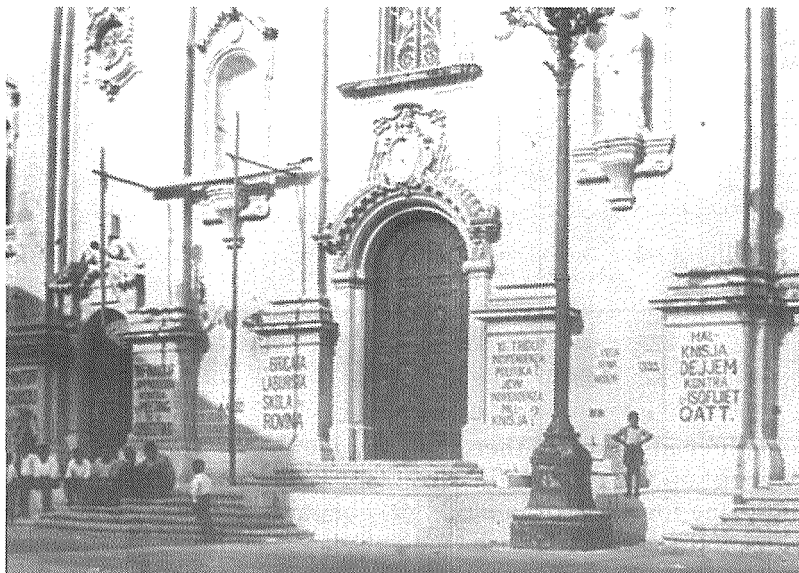
Scenes of 'Mintoffian' rioting on 28th April 1958 in what *The Times of Malta* headlined as "The Battle for Malta". Four days earlier Governor Laycock had taken over the administration of the Islands after accepting the government's resignation, and Police Commissioner de Gray professed his duty to serve the Crown. In a Rediffusion broadcast on 29th April Archbishop Gonzi condemned violence and urged calm. A state of emergency was declared on the following day.

In fact, Mintoff's attitudes and tactics were probably far more harmful than some of his proclaimed ideas, which were secular and even salutary by twentieth century standards - a time in the Catholic Church of *aggiornamento* and ecumenism during the second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965... but also a time when the Communist advance seemed menacing. Ideas could change; the style of governance and the disposition to power was less likely to do so. One of the stalwarts of Mintoff's party who served as editor of *The Voice of Malta* from 1959 and then as the party's president, was Dr Anton Buttigieg, MLP Deputy Leader between 1962 and 1976. In his memoirs Buttigieg, who was also one of Malta's leading poets, commented negatively about certain traits in Mintoff's character which aroused instincts of hostility unnecessarily causing divisiveness. Buttigieg (d. 1983) wrote:

Mintoff is too hasty and what he wants he wants quickly. Apart from being much too hasty, he likes being obstinate and he enjoys displeasing others; instead of trying to court sympathy he tries to impose. That is why then there is fighting and trouble and above all division among the people."⁴

With the advantage of hindsight, it may have to be generally admitted that the opposition's reading of at least some of Mintoff's propensities in the early 1960s was not so far-fetched, however reactionary and xenophobic it may have appeared to an

⁴ Literally from the original MS: "...Mintoff iħobb iħgħagħel wiżq u dak li jrid iridu malajr. Barra milli huwa ħgħagħieli z-zejjed, huwa jħobb iwebbes rasu, jieħu gost jurta lil haddieħor u flok jipprova jġibed is-simpatija jipprova jimponi. Ġħalhekk imbghad ikun hemm il-ġlied u l-ġħilt u fuq kollox il-firda fost il-poplu..." Buttigieg was prompted to make this general assessment of Mintoff's typical manner of dealing when referring to certain measures he had taken during the 1956 referendum on Integration when, he added, "a lot of worry and adversity arose needlessly as this could have been avoided with a little patience and tactics..." ("ħafna nkwiēt u ġlied inqala' ħħal xejn u b'daqxejn sabar u tattika seta' jġi evitat...") This text is being reproduced here *tale quale*.



In the wake of a bitter 'politico-religious' dispute between the Gonzi-led Roman Catholic Church and the Mintoff-led Malta Labour Party, which mainly started in 1960 and escalated in 1961, rival slogans proclaim commitments such as (above, on the facade of the Naxxar parish church): "Always with the Church, never against the Bishops"; and (below, plastering the Ghaxaq Labour Party club): "With the Church always, against Mintoff never".

or temperamental, except that, unlike Mintoff, he spoke as the Vicar of Christ, sceptre in hand. This confrontation, particularly the ostracising sanctions and mortal sin associated with it, may have kept the turbulent 'demonized' Mintoff at bay for longer than might otherwise have been the case, but it tore into the flesh of Maltese social relations and invaded national politics.

As a person Borg Olivier was quite different to these two. Slow but calculating, rarely losing his cool, reading character, delegating implementation, stubborn and tenacious, leisurely and even exasperating, a *bon viveur* respected for his gentlemanly social graces, adept at using time as a healer when he could do so, his character may be gauged from this *esprit* during a press conference at Luqa airport. A Nationalist supporter in the crowd threw a penny at a Labour journalist, Paul Carachi, missing him and almost hitting the Prime Minister instead. Borg Olivier turned to Carachi and made a joke of it: "Let's split it", he said, "a halfpenny each."⁶ While taking full political advantage of ecclesiastical interdicts against his adversaries if and as it suited him and his own party, Borg Olivier did not allow these to interfere with social intercourse. Thus for example he was at the wedding reception in Casal Paola of a young "interdicted" Labour MP who in August 1964 had just been married "in the sacristy".⁷

Sir Hilary Blood's appointment in 1960 to inquire into the constitutional position was a typical British problem-solving response: on one hand it played for time and thus might have had, to some extent, a calming-down effect; on the other hand, it offered scope for on-the-spot analyses and recommendations by a detached

⁶ "Il-Partiti regghu waslu lura", *Il-Helsien*, 2 Mar. 1964, p. 1: "ejja naqsmuh sitta kull wiehed".

⁷ "Lino Spiteri Jizzewweg", *Il-Helsien*, 21 Aug. 1964, p. 1. The marriage took place in the same sacristy in Rabat where another Labour journalist MP, Dr Joseph Micallef Stafrace, had been married three years earlier.

rapporteur.⁸ The expectation of Maltese politicians generally was that fresh elections should be held immediately in 1958, and that the demonstrations following Mintoff's resignation be not used as a pretext for reverting to direct rule. Blood, who started his work in Malta in November 1960 and had his report published by March of the following year, was largely boycotted by the parties when he came to Malta, so he sized up the situation as best he could through whatever contacts he could make with others in the know.

That Blood recommended a restoration of responsible government came as no surprise, because the House of Commons had been informed of the British Government's intention to do that by the Secretary of State as early as July 1960. However, some of the changes which his Constitutional Commission put forward, and which were accepted, may be judged to have been a tentative *mise-en-scene* for what, it now seems, was rather expected to follow in their tracks. They certainly provided the operational parameters within which subsequent developments unfolded until September 1964, although there were always ifs and buts.

The Malta (Constitution) Order in Council of 1961⁹ laid down the operative constitutional status of the Island for the years before it took - we now know - the plunge to independence. It almost foresaw it, and laid down the carpet. The dyarchical principle - of a 'Maltese' and a co-existing 'Imperial' government - no longer featured here, as had been the case in the 1921 and 1947 constitutions. There was to be only one recognised form of government: the Maltese government. For the first time, specific constitutional provisions

⁸ The other members of the Blood commission were Edward St John, Q.C., an Australian, Fred Hayday, and Sir Alfred Roberts, who fell ill.

⁹ The text 'Malta - The Malta (Constitution) Order in Council, 1961', was a Cmd. paper reprinted by the Dept. of Information, Valletta, 1961, pp. 52; the Maltese version is entitled 'Il-Kostituzzjoni ta' Malta - 1961'. For summaries of these Orders in Council see *Malta Review*, Special Issue, Malta Independence 21st September 1964, Dept. of Information, Valletta, pp. 17-19.

were made for human rights. The expedient of 'reserved matters', on which the British side had relied to safeguard its external interests, was replaced by a system of 'concurrent powers', which similarly implied a more integrated or consultative approach. Most tellingly of all, we had the Governor substituted by a 'United Kingdom High Commissioner' as London's 'agent' in Malta, almost as if he would be an ambassador extraordinary or plenipotentiary accredited to an independent state.

The Governor remained there, but his role would be rather more perfunctory. He would be the Queen's representative and like a 'Head of State', in which function he would normally act on the advice of the Cabinet. His discretionary powers however comprised matters pertaining to the operational and disciplinary control of the police force, and the appointments and disciplinary procedures in the civil service and the judiciary, once again subject to certain provisions respecting institutional norms (such as the Public Service Commission). The Governor could sometimes consult with the Prime Minister. He could still reserve bills affecting internal security or impinging on defence and external relations objected to by the UK Commissioner, or bills repugnant to the Constitution or affecting certain ordinances, such as the Broadcasting Ordinance. He could also 'reserve' any bills to raise government loans. Clearly, therefore, he still had a role to play which was not altogether ceremonial. The UK Commissioner clipped the Governor's wings, but not his feathers.

The Cabinet led by the Prime Minister reporting to a legislature of 50 members elected by universal suffrage, would in principle be able to some degree to handle defence and foreign affairs, subject to certain restraints. Malta was, again for the first time, designated as the 'State of Malta'. Henceforth its Legislative Assembly could also legislate on issues relating to defence and foreign affairs, subject to the advice and generally the consent of the British Government through its newly-created representative, its so-called Commissioner. In trade relations with other countries, however, the Malta Government had full authority under this Constitution to do much as it pleased. A Consultative Council, to be chaired by the Governor, was set up. This was intended to facilitate the smooth working of



Eminenza Reverendissima,

Pare che cotesta Segreteria di Stato sia sotto l'impressione che la questione, che da parecchi anni ormai agita la vita delle due Isole Maltesi, non sia altro che una questione personale tra i Vescovi (e specialmente l'Arcivescovo) da una parte e il Signor Mintoff, già Primo Ministro di Malta per tre infeliciissimi anni,

L'intenzione del Sig. Mintoff, che abbandono' la pratica della religione sin dalla sua prima gioventu' e perdette pienamente la Fede, e' di socializzare Malta, staccare il popolo dalla Chiesa e relegare questa alla sacrestia. Egli aiutato finanziariamente dall'Inghilterra, che si serviva di lui come di strumento per integrare Malta (colla Inghilterra), riuscì ad attirare alla sua

una catena di insulti e di insinuazioni maligne contro di me, contro il Vescovo di Gozo, i Parroci e il clero in generale delle due diocesi. Questo lo fa per annientare l'influenza della nostra parola: l'ha detto confidenzialmente il Segretario del Partito, che di questi giorni si e' dimesso. Come si vede e' una guerra sul tipo della guerra fatta alla Chiesa nei paesi di oltre la cortina di ferro.

~~Domenica scorsa~~

Dietro insistenza del buon popolo maltese si tenne una adunanza di popolo - 100,000 persone - per protestare contro le offese fatte a noi Vescovi, al clero e alle tradizioni cattoliche di Malta, nonché contro i frequenti contatti coi governi comunisti e contro l'affiliazione del Partito del Lavoro, senza il consenso dello stesso Partito e contro la volonta' della maggioranza dei lavoratori, all'Afro-Asiatica Commissione. Fu una cosa straordinaria per Malta. Il "B.B.C." di Londra disse che non si vide mai una folla così grande.

Accludo alcuni ritagli di giornali locali, che confermano quanto scrivo a nome mio e a nome del Vescovo di Gozo.

E chino al bacio della S. Porpora, con ossequio e venerazione mi confermo

dell'Eminenza Vostra Rev.ma

dev.mo ed ubb.mo servo

+ Michele
Arcivescovo di Malta

A Sua Eminenza Rev.ma
Il Sig. Card. DOMENICO TARDINI
Segretario di Stato di S.S.
Citta' del Vaticano.

Excerpts from a letter of 7th March 1961 from Archbishop Gonzi, who was in touch with the former MLP secretary-general Pellegrini, to Cardinal Tardini, denying the Vatican's "impression" that the Malta church question was just a personality clash, and justifying his own position.

(Document by courtesy of Dr Daniel Micallef.)

the 'concurrent powers' stratagem, mainly in matters relating to defence and external affairs. The UK Commissioner would be a member of it *ex officio*, together with up to three nominees each by the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. He would not, however, be in the chair.

When Iain Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies, presented the Constitutional Commission's report to the Commons in March 1961, he agreed with the Leader of the Opposition Hugh Gaitskell that this was "a considerable step forward", adding that the new Malta constitution had "considerable similarities" with the constitutional principles which had been established in the State of Singapore. Macleod agreed with Gaitskell too that this was "not in any way, of course, a final stage" of Malta's constitutional development. Their first concern had been "the immediate future".¹⁰

One of the supplementary questions on Malta asked later on in the month concerned broadcasting. This was already a sensitive subject because in 1961 a Broadcasting Authority was set up and by 1962, still more importantly, a Maltese television station, MTV, went on air, broadcasting in Maltese and English. This would quickly revolutionize the communications scene in Malta, which until now had depended on newspapers and radio. The television transmissions received in Malta until 1962 had been Italian ones, in black and white, which only a minority could fully understand, although many more would certainly have followed the Italian songs, festivals, shows and spectacles. As in the case of radio in the 1930s, so with television in the 1960s, the English and Maltese medium only made it to a Maltese audience after the Italian one had already begun to penetrate Maltese listening and viewing audiences.¹¹ Politicians, always keen on what publicity they can get, quickly took note of this new medium and fought for airtime. As

¹⁰ Hansard, Commons, 8 Mar. 1961, cols. 471-477.

¹¹ See H. Frendo, 'The Fear Dynamic', *Maltese Journalism, 1838-1992* (Press Club, Malta, 1994), p. 25.

tends to happen, parties in power get rather more coverage simply because they run the government and do things more than an opposition party can. Given the question of religious sentiments in Malta at a time of confrontation between the established church and the main opposition party, apart from other reasons, the access to airtime started on the wrong foot. The Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Hugh Fraser, told Major Patrick Wall that a bill setting up an Authority responsible for broadcasting and television was being enacted:

The Authority must satisfy itself that due impartiality is preserved on political matters and that, save under agreed procedures, no matter designed to serve the interest of any political party is included in the programmes.

It would be the special objective of the Authority to see that all parties would have a fair allocation of time over wireless and television, Fraser added. He was also asked, however, if he appreciated the fact that there would be “a complete monopoly in both sound and television broadcasting for Malta Rediffusion”. What possibility of independent expression would there be when sound and television broadcasting were under the control of one company?¹²

The former Chief Justice Sir Arturo Mercieca, writing under his nom-de-plume “Cato”, was among those who were critical of this new hybrid called “the United Kingdom Commissioner”. Unlike an ambassador he was neither accredited nor subject to the Maltese Government; on the contrary he was “endowed with the exercise of a continuous inquisitorial control” over Maltese local affairs. He had to be provided with Cabinet agenda, Cabinet decisions and conclusions with all the papers laid before Cabinet, with regard to all matters affecting defence or internal affairs (clause 28 of the 1961 Order-in-Council), as well as a copy of every Bill introduced in the Assembly. Moreover, following his advice, the British Government

¹² Hansard, Commons, 14 Mar. 1961, col. 1190.



Apart from newspapers and periodical publications, another means of mass communication among Maltese until 1962 when MTV went on air, was radio broadcasting, especially through the thousands of Rediffusion sets installed in homes. These provided a mix of information, entertainment, education and religious devotions, from the Angelus, the BBC World News and George Dougall's commentary "*Din hija Londra*" to cooking recipes, comic sketches, the recital of the rosary, and occasional broadcasts or discussion programmes of a political nature. One of the early 'Broadcasting Boards' was this, from left (back row): Mr Joe Fenech, Secretary to the Board; a British Government representative, Mr Peter Hayman, and his replacement Mr Michael Cullis; and Mr Paul Naudi from the Department of Information. In the front row (from left) are Professor Ġużè Aquilina, a prolific author and university don; the former Commissioner of Police J. E. Axisa as Chairman; and Mr Rogantin Cachia, a former Lyceum headmaster. The MBA members in 1962-64 were Mr E. G. Arrigo, C.B.E. (Chairman), Mr Edgar Staines, O.B.E. and Mr Em. C. Tabone.

(Photograph courtesy of Major E. J. Axisa.)

could request Ministers to take any action, or discontinue to take action, within a specified time; and in default of compliance, he could, under his seal, issue an order giving effect to the request. Such an order would "have the force of law", it would be published and it would "prevail over any law enacted locally and any instrument made thereunder" (clause 82). The UK Commissioner could also reserve a Bill before the Assembly for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure (clause 83). Mercieca clearly did not think much of Downing Street's "boasts" of a liberal constitutional improvement because now the Maltese Government would be consulted on matters of defence, external relations and Anglo-Maltese affairs. "How meagre and stinted proves to be this would-be concession", he wrote, "surrounded as it stands by such a high protective wall of distrust, controls and guarantees in favour of the still overpowering Nation."¹³

The person selected for this admittedly "hybrid" position, which conformed neither to a similar one in Singapore whose occupant was also responsible for South East Asia, nor to that of a High Commissioner representing the Queen as in Pakistan, was Sir Edward Wakefield, who had served in India and Arabia as well as been an MP.¹⁴ In his first press conference after taking up his duties in Malta, Wakefield saw Malta ideally as a prosperous self-governing state "firmly embedded in the Commonwealth and the western alliance." Although his business was to look after British interests in matters of defence and foreign affairs on which "concurrent powers were now held by both Governments", he hoped to spread the understanding that "the interests of Malta and Britain were ultimately identical." Any

¹³ Cato, "The United Kingdom Commissioner", *The Bulletin*, 22 Dec. 1961, enc. 926/1320.

¹⁴ Min., Eastwood/Poynton, 8 Feb. 1962, 926/1320. The Commissioner was to be "the official channel of communication between the Government of Malta and the United Kingdom Government." He was also "the official channel for dealings between the Services in Malta and the Government of Malta" as well as charged with normal "consular" responsibility for looking after the interests of British subjects (other than Maltese) in the Islands. 'Functions of the British Commissioner, Malta - Note for the Secretary of State', enc. 926/1320.

MEXJIN FUQ TRIQ WAHDA



"JEKK MA NAQBLUX FUQ TRIQ WAHDA (L-INTEGRATION), IS-SOLUZZJONI LOGIKA HUA L-OHRA (L-INDIPENDENZA)..." (MINTOFF FIL-PARLAMENT FIL-21 TA' MEJJU, 1957).

"IL-PARTI Hekk JAHSIBHA". WIEGBU DR. BORG OLIVIER DAK IN-NHAR F'ISEM IL-PARTI NAZZJONALISTA. "FERHAN IL-LEJLA JIEN ILLI ALMIENU JEKK DIN IT-TRIQ IBBLOKKJATA. NAQBLU FUQ L-OHRA". WIEGB DUMINKU MINTOFF FL-ISTESS LAQGHIA.

TFERRHUX LIS-SOCJALISTI; HALLU LIN-NAZZJONALISTI GHALL-AHHAR!

A caricature in the Strickland-owned anti-Independence daily *Il-Berqa* during the 1962 general election campaign showing Mintoff and Borg Olivier together leading a chained, blindfolded people into the jaws of hunger, unemployment and misery. It implores readers not to please the Socialists: "Vote for the Nationalists last!"

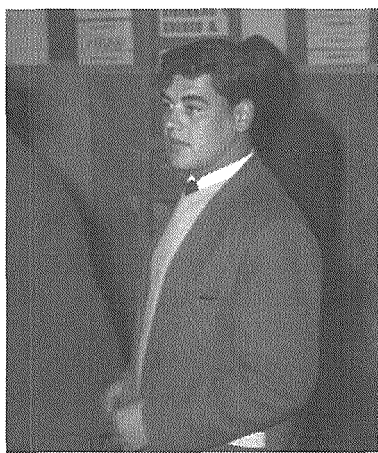
application by Malta to join the Common Market “would have to be sponsored by Britain” (which only joined it in 1973), but Britain “would explain to the Malta Government what Common Market membership would mean to the island.”¹⁵

In the general election held in February 1962, Borg Olivier’s PN polled 63,262 votes and had 25 MPs elected, to which another (Coronato Attard)) was added when he crossed the floor from Herbert Ganado’s PDN. The MLP polled 50,974 votes electing 16 MPs. Smaller parties elected nine MPs between them, soon reduced to eight because of Attard’s defection. Before accepting to form a government, Borg Oliver sought and obtained reassurance from the Governor, Admiral Grantham, and from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Reginald Maudling, that the “Blood Constitution” would be changed in accordance with his party’s manifesto, returning the police and other key areas to Maltese control.

Borg Olivier first consulted with the Governor and the Secretary of State through the Governor, then he went up to London further to negotiate and finalise the changes agreed to. It was only after he had obtained a clear understanding on the assurances sought that he took the oath of office and named his Cabinet. This included seven other Ministers, of whom the eldest and the youngest were medical doctors from the South of the Island: Dr Antonio Paris of Cospicua and Dr Alexander Cachia Zammit of Zejtun. The senior Minister after Borg Olivier was Dr Giovanni Felice, a Sliema lawyer with a grasp of financial matters.¹⁶

¹⁵ ‘Malta Vital To Western Security - New Commissioner Outlines Aims’, *The Times*, Lond., 15 Mar. 1962, enc. 926/1320.

¹⁶ Borg Olivier, 51, assumed responsibility for economic planning and finance. The other Cabinet members were Dr Giovanni Felice, 62, for industrial development and tourism; Dr Antonio Paris, 72, education; Dr Carmelo Caruana, 45, agriculture, power and communications; Dr Tommaso Caruana Demajo, 51, justice; Dr Joseph Spiteri, 41, works and housing; Dr Alexander Cachia Zammit, 37, employment and social services, including emigration; and the Prime Minister’s brother, Dr Paolo Borg Olivier, 60, health.



Watching and waiting as the votes get counted at the Knightshall in Valletta, Mintoff is seen with (above, from left) Joe Zerafa and Danny Cremona, the MLP's secretary general and president, to his right; Dr Anton Buttigieg, the deputy leader, behind him; Dr Patrick Holland and Dr Joe Micallef Stafrace. Below (from left): Dr Buttigieg and Miss Mabel Strickland. Bottom right: Lorry Sant, 24, at the start of a militant trade union and political life in the Dockyard and the MLP.



The organs of two of the smaller "centre" or "church" parties, which returned 4 seats each in the February 1962 general election: *Malta Taghna* of Dr Herbert Ganado's Democratic Nationalist Party, and *It-Tarka* of Toni Pellegrini's Christian Workers Party. The former party had broken away from the PN, the latter from the MLP; both opposed Independence in the foreseeable future. Right: A specimen electoral list under Malta's proportional representation electoral system showing the names of some of the 1962 party candidates (on the Valletta district) set against the emblems of their respective parties. The candidates of all parties except the PN identified themselves on the ballot sheet with their respective party leader in person.

	00 — 00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.
	FENECH (Joseph Fenech — Businessman — Malta Labour Party — 30' Mintoff — 850, St. Joseph's High Road, Mtarfur).
	FORMOSA (Vincent Mary Formosa — Captain 1st. — Captain Formosa — Progressive Constitutional Party — Partit ta' Mabel — Partit ta' Strickland — 68, Windsor Terrace, Silema).
	GALEA (Frances Galea Ph.C., — Chemist — Spizjara — Partit Demokratiku Nazzjonalista — ta' Ganado — 14, Old Bakery Street, Valletta).
	GALEA (Professur Guis' Galea — il-talib tal-Ahmar — ta' Pellegrini — 29, St. Barbara Bastion, Valletta).
	GANADO (Herbert Ganado — Advocate — Kap tal-Partit Demokratiku Nazzjonalista — ta' Ganado — 8, Filippa Seeberras Square, Floriana).
	HOLLAND (Patrick Holland — Avukat — Is-Sur Patrick — Patrick — Is-Sur Holland — Malta Labour Party — ma' Mintoff — 49, Christopher Street, Valletta).
	MICALLEF STAFRACE (Joseph Micallef Stafpace — Avukat — Stafpace — ta' Marmara — Malta Labour Party — ta' Mintoff — Block 11, Flat IV, Housing Estate, Qormi).
	MIFSUD (John Mifsud — Lotto Receiver — tal-Partit Demokratiku Nazzjonalista — ta' Hansley — 188, Flat 5, St. Ursula Street, Valletta).
	MINTOFF (Dom. Mintoff — Partit — Malta Labour Party — Olives, Tarxien).
	MORTIMER (Arthur Stuart Mortimer, M.B.E., B.Sc., B.E.&A., — Architect — Partit — ta' Mortimer — Progressive Constitutional Party — Partit ta' Mabel — Partit ta' Strickland — 92, Main Street, St. Julian's).
	PACE (Paolo Pace — Negoziant — Partit Nazzjonalista — 18/A, Flat 5, Scots Street, Valletta).
	RAGONESI (Victor E. Ragonesi — Avukat — Segretarju Generali tal-Partit Nazzjonalista — Partit Nazzjonalista — 83, Dingli Street, Silema).
	SEEBERRAS (Alexander Seeberras Trigona — Notary Public — Progressive Constitutional Party — Partit ta' Mabel — Partit ta' Strickland — 184, Merchants Street, Valletta).
	VALENZIA (Dr. Arturo Valenzia — Advocate — Partit ta' Mabel — Partit Kostituzzjonali Progressiv — Partit ta' Strickland — 43/2r, West Street, Valletta).
	VASSALLO (Joseph George Vassallo, Dip. Pol. Econ. (Oxon), F.R. Econ. S. — Journalist — Progressive Constitutional Party — Partit ta' Mabel — Partit ta' Strickland — 219, Marina Street, Pietà).
	ZAMMIT (George Zammit — Advocate — "Gino" Zammit — Christian Workers Party — ta' Pellegrini — 35, St. Barbara Bastion, Valletta).
	ZAMMIT LA ROSA (Carmelo Zammit La Rosa — Businessman — Partit tal-Haddiema Nsara — ta' Pellegrini — 17, Tigné Sea Front, Silema).

In fulfilment of his promise to proceed to London to re-assert a Maltese premier's responsibility for police affairs, the public service and the judiciary, Borg Olivier on taking office broadcast to the nation on 3rd March. The new prime minister briefed the public on his meetings with the Governor on 24th and 27th February and again on 2nd March, and the assurances obtained:

After consultations with the Executive of the Party, I gave His Excellency a final answer yesterday evening. I told him that I could accept his invitation to form a Government. This morning I was sworn in as Prime Minister, and I promised the Governor that by next Monday morning I should form my Cabinet.

Further to his press conference on 23rd February, Borg Olivier spelt out the constitutional changes, which had to be brought into effect immediately,

so that the Maltese Government would regain control over the Police and the Civil Service. It was principally on these two points, and on the relations of the Cabinet with the Governor, that I discussed matters with His Excellency. I felt that I could not agree to form a Government unless I had been satisfied that I had opened the way to preliminary discussions with the Secretary of State in connection with these objections which should be removed without loss of time...

"This was quite apart", he added, "from other discussions, to be held later on, relating to the solution of the wider constitutional problems of Malta... After all, the election results did not leave the slightest doubt as to what the people think regarding the solution which has to be found in connection with the constitutional question of Malta..."

I shall... press for radical changes in the constitution with the aim of fulfilling the electoral programme of the Nationalist Party concerning the status which, we maintain, Malta should have as an independent member of the

Commonwealth. With the help of God and with your support and co-operation, I believe that the Government will secure this improvement for our country, in the common interest of us all. Long live Malta.¹⁷

On arriving in London from Rome on 23rd March,¹⁸ Borg Olivier explained the purpose of his visit to the B.B.C. at London Airport:

I propose to endeavour to obtain the United Kingdom Government's assent to a few important amendments in the Constitution. In order that my Government may get a firm grip of the situation and carry on the administration of the Island it must have full responsibility for the Police and the Civil Service. At a later stage I shall tackle the whole constitutional question certainly not unmindful of my pledge to achieve independence within the Commonwealth. I make bold to hope that Britain will want to be generous with Malta. With a good start I will feel in a position to get down to business and negotiate. However I feel in duty bound to go ahead only if obstacles in the way are removed. I cannot be expected to make the unworkable work.¹⁹

In the course of discussions which Borg Olivier held in London during the last week of March, Maudling agreed to amend the Constitution on matters relating to the police, the public service and

¹⁷ 'Statement by the Prime Minister of Malta, the Hon. Dr Borg Olivier, to the People of Malta and Gozo, to be broadcast on the 'A' Network at 8.00 p.m. on Saturday, 3rd March, 1962', enc. 926/1692.

¹⁸ The British Legation's Minister Plenipotentiary to the Holy See was Sir Peter Scarlett. While in London, Borg Olivier and his delegation were entertained to lunch at the Dorchester Hotel by Mr Maudling. Also present were the Minister of State, Lord Perth; Sir George Dowty; Sir John Martin; Christopher Eastwood; John Kisch; and Mr Maudling's private secretary, Edward West.

¹⁹ "The Prime Minister in London", *The Times of Malta*, 24 Mar. 1962, p. 2, enc. CO 926/1692.

some other aspects. Maltese Ministers, not the Governor, would henceforth be responsible for “the provision, maintenance and administration and the use and operational control of the Police Force”, Maudling explained to his colleagues in April. The recommendations of the Public Service Commission and of the Judicial Service Commission would not go to the Governor but to the Prime Minister. Judges and Magistrates would be appointed by the Governor “on the advice of the Prime Minister”. The Governor would not be entitled to see or be provided with all the papers which were available to the Cabinet and any other information concerning the Government of Malta. The Prime Minister would keep the Governor fully informed about “the general conduct of the Government” and would furnish him with full information on any matter which he might require.²⁰

Parrying questions in a subsequent sitting, Maudling said that no amending Order in Council could be issued immediately because the alterations would have to be drafted and submitted to a meeting of the Privy Council. He also conceded that Dr Borg Olivier and himself had agreed to have further talks at a later date concerning constitutional development as well as financial aid and economic planning.²¹ Agreement having been reached in line with Malta’s requests, these were duly implemented with effect from 30th July 1962.²²

Within weeks of taking office, an electoral pledge had been fulfilled. Although Borg Olivier spent time in London discussing these changes, he had the nod even before Parliament was opened on 26th April. Times were a-changing. That was a sign that the British were prepared to entrust Borg Olivier’s administration with powers which they had felt it necessary to withhold from Mintoff’s after the troubles of 1958.

²⁰ ‘Extract from Official Report’, 16 Apr. 1962, enc. 926/1337.

²¹ ‘Extract from Official Report’, 19 Apr. 1962, enc. 926/1338. A copy of this extract was sent to Malta on 24th April.

²² See i.a. the Hansard report, 16 Apr. 1962, enc. CO 926/1337.

There was thus a taste of victory for the new administration, indicating a newly found prowess in dealings with Britain. It was a shot in the arm for Borg Olivier, reinforcing his leadership and raising his spirits. With his spirits, he also raised his stakes.

If the Maltese were out 'to milk the British cow', well, the British got wind of it and locked and barred the farm gates. Borg Olivier's government asked for the renewal of - as they saw it - an already promised 1958 multi-million pound package offer. That comprised a grant of some £25,000,000, originally linked to Integration, compared to the £16,500,000 or £8,500,000 less which Malta was getting under the current Development Plan. The Maltese Government wanted aid to help defray a deficit of £1.5 million in recurrent expenditure, an increase of £1.8 million in funds being made available by Britain for capital development; and the conversion into a gift of an amount of £5 million offered as a loan. They wished to use grant money - which was not likely to be spent within the period on schemes provided for by the current Development Plan for 1959/64 - on new development projects. The budget deficit on recurrent expenditure was due to more investment in social services, the setting away of £500,000 for the Contingency Fund, making good for a loss of £280,000 incurred on securities by the Government Savings Bank, and a remission of taxation, described by Borg Olivier as "the ending of an enforced loan", totalling £300,000.²³

Borg Olivier must have had some qualms about his prospects this time, although it should be underlined that in his earlier address to

²³ See especially the minutes of an important meeting held at the Colonial Office on 17th August 1962, CO926/1183/48583. For the British side, together with the new Colonial Secretary, Mr Duncan Sandys, there were Sir John Martin, Mr Galsworthy and Mr Russell. For the Maltese side, together with Dr Borg Olivier, there were Professor J. J. Cremona, the Attorney-General; Mr Edgar Cuschieri, the Administrative Secretary; Dr Victor Ragonesi, the Public Relations Secretary; and Mr A. Salomone, the Financial Secretary. The UK Commissioner, Sir Edward Wakefield, was also present.

the nation at the beginning of March he had already repeatedly spelt out his government's ultimate constitutional goal, in accordance with his party's electoral programme: Independence within the Commonwealth. On the eve of his departure for London in late June, he again broadcast to the country explaining that Malta's situation was a difficult one, sketching out his delegation's desires and plans for Malta. Briefly, Borg Olivier sought to make the argument that Maltese economic development had been long subjected to and hampered by British imperial needs. For that reason, for many years, Malta could not effectively seek other novel and pertinent forms for a more self-sustaining existence. For thus depriving Malta of her options, the British bore a special responsibility to help her now that they were leaving.

In a broad policy sweep, Borg Olivier noted how much needed to be done in different spheres of industrial development, for the raising of the standard of education and other social services, to increase jobs by providing opportunities outside of employment with Service establishments, and to avoid unemployment generally:

From the Colonial Government run by the British my Government has inherited an economic plan which, at least so far, has not yielded good results, and a constitution full of shackles and restrictions. The military barracks are empty, the harbours are empty. There has been considerable increased taxation amounting to over £1¹/₄ million yearly, and a reserve fund of about £1 million has been completely exhausted. In the field of tourism, public money has been squandered without yielding any productive returns. Many other evils have been inherited, not the least of which is the threat of large-scale discharges...

Attacking the economic dependence caused by imperial interests in Malta, Borg Olivier stated that British defence interests had militated in particular against the development of a Maltese tourist industry "like other islands in the Mediterranean and beyond". This could have brought in "such vast sums of money as well as the setting up of related industries to the great benefit of our national wealth."

“Because of Defence interests”, Borg Olivier insisted, “we could not build an economy based on industries...” And again: “We could never find alternative sources of revenue owing to the interests and exigencies of Defence...” Having made that point, he then asked his Maltese audience:

In these circumstances would it be fair for the British Government to render the situation more hopeless for our Government by shirking its responsibilities towards its own workers and employees? Would it be fair today to throw out into the streets thousands of workers with consequent enormous hardship on their families, when the British Government is fully aware that adequate consideration has not as yet been given to the provision of suitable alternative employment essential to their livelihood?

Once the British Government under their own administration, with all the experts and funds they had at their disposal, and with the reins of Malta’s administration completely in their hands, had failed to provide alternative employment for their own employees,

they cannot now expect me to achieve in four weeks what they failed to accomplish in four years. It was just four weeks ago that they expressed the intention of substantially reducing in time the number of jobs with the Defence Departments... The British Government did not effect discharges when the Governor was administering Malta on behalf of the Colonial Office. It would now be a clear sign of lack of a sense of justice, goodwill and co-operation with the Maltese Government, were the British Government to insist now on effecting discharges...

In what was essentially a nationalist *dénouement* of colonial exploitation and under-development, Borg Olivier was preparing the ground to launch his request for a hefty financial package in his forthcoming London talks. He wanted to impress upon the British that they were morally obliged to help Malta which was being adversely hit by their changed policies, with a dig at their allegedly

preferential treatment for violent regimes such as the Makarios one in Cyprus. Borg Olivier made no concession to the jobs which Defence needs had also created and the monies which the fleet and other works had generated over time in Malta. What he sought to attack was dependence on needs which were not home-grown and not nationally-oriented in the long-term: needs which could change at the outsider's whim.

In his endeavours in the national interest, Borg Olivier felt that he had the support of all the Maltese political parties, of the Church, of the General Workers Union and the other trade unions:

I urge the people to keep calm and to have faith for they may rest assured that their rights will be fully safeguarded. I should think that in the end reason will prevail and an equitable solution be also found to this problem... The British Government should realise that the Maltese people are once and for all past the stage of begging for charity... Any unilateral decision by the British Government which damages instead of improving Malta's situation cannot but provoke serious reactions and unilateral decisions by the Maltese Government.

Borg Olivier was angry: just as his Economic Committee had - on the prevailing premises - completed a study about the economic plans and projections required, further discharges were suddenly announced by the British side. Now again, as in March before proceeding to London, Borg Olivier did not hold back from restating the Independence ideal for Malta, more couched and more seething as it now was in his discourse on economic survival. He said:

There is a solution to every problem. The remedy for Malta in such a situation could be found were Britain not to remain hard and indifferent towards a tolerant and loyal people who has up to now lost great opportunities of economic aid, similar to those being extended to Makarios and others who in their own country, instead of shedding their blood as we did to further the interests of the British

defence plan, shed the blood of those who treated them far better than they are treating us... We cannot work out the solution by ourselves because up to now we are not free to look after our own interests... If there is goodwill, which on Malta's part will not be lacking, I am prepared to face one situation after another with a courage that one expects of anyone who wants to turn his country into a Nation capable of competing in a free world... ²⁴

Malta's economic condition and prospects for economic diversification had been a sore point throughout the post-war era, although they had never seemed as fragile as now. Among the expert reports drawn up to take stock of the prevailing economic situation, and to suggest ways ahead, there were those by Sir Wilfred Woods (*Report on the Finances of the Government of Malta*, 1946), Sir George Schuster (*Interim Report on the Financial and Economic Structure of the Maltese Islands*, 1950), Thomas Balogh and Dudley Seers (*The Economic Problems of Malta*, 1955), and most importantly for the next Five-Year Development Plan covering 1964/69, there would be that by the UN economic adviser Wolfgang Stolper and his team (*Economic Adaptation and Development in Malta*, 1964).

Data and explanations about the exact amounts of financial assistance and resources do not always tally and may be a trifle confusing because of differences in emphasis and interpretation or changes due to revisions; moreover the multiplier effect from reduced expenditure due to a diminishing presence of Service personnel was also a factor which could not be so precisely determined due to fluctuations and other variables. In 1959 the colonial government had established a 5-year plan which provided for total resources of £32¼ million, of which £29¼ million in grants or loans provided by Britain, and £3 million raised by local loans.

²⁴ 'Broadcast by the Prime Minister on the Eve of the Departure of the Malta Government Delegation to London', trans., enc., 926/1692. The original text was released by the Dept. of Information, Valletta, 25 June 1962.

In July 1961 this plan was revised to provide for total resources of some £35½ million, an extra £1 million being raised by local loan funds and an application being made to the World Bank for a loan of between £2 and £3 million towards the cost of a new power station and water distillation plant. By the end of 1962, 22 factories were reported to be in production and a number of further applications had been approved under the Aids to Industries Scheme, which gave start-up grants of up to 33⅓ % and generous tax exemptions for up to ten years. Service expenditure reached its peak during 1960 with a total overall expenditure of £22.5 million; after that the position was largely dominated by the Services run-down on the one hand and the development plan on the other.²⁵ But how could the damage to be inflicted on jobs and the economy by the British Services 'Run-Down' be restrained? How could the Maltese economy be diversified in time to rise to the new, abrupt challenges facing it? Could it be done at all, outside of a conjuror's realm?

Borg Olivier did not want to use capital funds for recurrent expenditure: he needed more of both, and a reserve - all the more so if faced by a sudden bout of discharges on a big scale. Briefly and generally stated, what Malta was actually getting from Britain in 1962 was considerably less than what she would have got under the proposed 1958 Integration package - when however she would have been part and parcel of Britain, generally subject to its laws and taxes and needs, defence or any other. The cutting down on defence expenditure was a ruthless exercise, as cuts in public expenditure usually are, only that Malta was at the receiving end, without as much as the courtesy of prior consultations.

²⁵ See the report prepared by Major Patrick Wall, M.P., for the Conservative Commonwealth Council Conference, 'Malta 1961-1963', and the comments on it by Mr A. Salomone, Financial Secretary in Valletta, 29 Apr. 1963, Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, MEPP/Conf./103/63, OPM Arch., Castille. See also the "Note on Malta's Economic Performance since 1960" from Malta House (then at 24, Haymarket, London, S.W.1), n.d., c.1963), enc. CO 926/1857/48655.

The Defence White Paper of 1962 stated that the defence facilities in Malta were to be reduced to those required for a forward-operating base, and that the necessary discharges would be spread over a period of five years. This statement led to a debate in the British Parliament strongly condemning the “unilateral and arbitrary intentions of the British Government to discharge Admiralty employees without adequate negotiation with the Malta Government”. It was demanded “that adequate means be found, together with the Malta Government, to prevent misery and hardship to thousands of families and to find alternative work and livelihood for them.” Later Her Majesty’s Government agreed not to start the rundown until 1st January 1963 but refused to extend the rundown period beyond 1967, it being understood that the number of discharges would become a serious problem by the end of 1964, estimated at 10,000 lost jobs. However well the industrialisation of the Island proceeded, emigration expanded and tourism increased, it would be impossible to provide alternative work for the thousands of workers to be discharged so soon. In his Candlemas speech in February 1963 just as the rundown began, the Governor of Malta, Sir Maurice Dorman, said he was advised that by 1967 some 29,000 people would be out of work here in Malta. “In a nutshell”, he explained despondently and gloomily, “one could say that by 1967 it is possible that nearly one-fourth of our people might be out of work, one-fifth of our national income would have vanished and one-sixth of the Government revenue would have fallen away. This is a dark sky, a stormy sea and a bleak outlook for Independence.”²⁶

It is in the light of such constraints and preoccupations that the Sandys-Borg Olivier meeting of 17th August 1962 at the Colonial Office has to be seen. Faced by a stalemate there, it is no wonder that tempers became frayed, with that meeting ending rather abruptly. All that Sandys was prepared to concede was an extra offer

²⁶ Quoted in ‘Note on Malta’s economic performance’, *ibid.*, f.5.

of £100,000. Borg Olivier rejected this saying the acceptance of it would have made him "a laughing stock."

Sandys said that some at least of the increased expenditure proposed did not seem to him to be "either wise or necessary"; he felt that it should in fact be possible for the Malta Government to balance its recurrent budget. The Maltese national debt, one of Sandys' assistants held, was considerably smaller than that of most other countries. HMG had already committed £22 million to Malta, £16½ in gifts and £5½ in loan. That was "a not unreasonable proportion of loan to grant assistance", said the Secretary of State. The UK, he added, "could not go on making increases."

Borg Olivier on his part, vociferously assisted by Ragonesi, insisted that if the need in Malta was immediately less pressing than elsewhere "the prospect in Malta was worse." The whole idea of loans, Sandys emphasised, was "to develop, and that development produces the revenue from which the loans are paid back and further development financed." But, retorted Borg Olivier, not all projects could be self-supporting. He pointed out that to date only 750 new jobs had been created, compared with 7,500 required by 1964.

Much of the discussion centred around the 1958 financial package, with Borg Olivier and Ragonesi insisting that Lennox-Boyd and Governor Laycock had retained it on offer. Sandys on the other hand held that those earlier proposals had "lapsed", and that "it was futile for the Maltese Government to try to revive piecemeal parts of the 1958 agreement", which had posed the choice at the end of the five years between "full integration or...some other agreed constitutional and economic basis for Malta's future." Lennox-Boyd's, Sandys said, had been only "a tentative suggestion".

Going back to Lennox-Boyd's statements at the time to the British Parliament, it is obvious that much as he was disappointed if not distraught by the grotesque twist which the whole Integration episode had taken, he nonetheless was keen to emphasise that Malta

would not be abandoned to its fate by Britain. Therefore, the promised financial aid could or would still be forthcoming under a different constitutional arrangement. Admittedly, that was in March 1958, before Mintoff's resignation and the ensuing hullabaloo; but it was also three months after the passing of the 'Break with Britain' resolution by the Maltese Assembly. The rift had already taken place. In the discussions concluded in March 1958, Mintoff had "refused to recommend integration to the Maltese people on the imaginative terms proposed by Her Majesty's Government."

Talking in the same breath of integration with Britain and independence from it - the only common denominator to the two conflicting proposals apparently being how much money would be on offer - Lennox-Boyd was taken amiss by the Maltese leader. Adopting the proverbial under-statement, he was politely conveying that message to the House of Commons only a few weeks before Mintoff's decision to resign from office in April 1958. Referring to Mr Mintoff, Lennox-Boyd had continued thus:

He attempted to attach a political condition, namely, the right to independence on a unilateral basis, which strikes at the root of a union in mutual confidence which was the basis of the integration proposals. It is impossible for the United Kingdom Government to pledge Parliament to proceed with integration unless a very different state of mind is shown... the Prime Minister of Malta proposed that Her Majesty's Government should immediately enter into further financial commitments of a most extensive character or be ready to grant independence to Malta. He suggested that in implementing the plan for integration the United Kingdom Parliament should undertake that until such time as full economic equivalence was achieved, they would be prepared to grant independence to Malta if a Maltese Government were at any time during that period returned to office with a mandate for that policy. At a later stage he offered to withdraw this proposal, provided that the United Kingdom Parliament were prepared to extend to the

Maltese people, at their next Election, a choice between integration and independence.

In these circumstances, Lennox-Boyd had “revived the tentative suggestion” that rather than lose all the fruits of the long Anglo-Maltese negotiations, Britain would be prepared, if the Maltese people so desired, to proceed with interim constitutional and economic arrangements for a period of five years. The essence of this five-year plan would be that Malta would be granted a constitution broadly on the lines of that proposed under the integration plan, save for the time being making Malta part of the United Kingdom and providing for representation at Westminster; the same economic and financial arrangements; and, at the end of the five years, both Governments would consult together to review the working of the constitutional and economic arrangements and to consider whether they could then proceed to the conclusion of arrangements on a permanent basis. In concluding his speech in the Commons, Lennox-Boyd had made it “abundantly clear” that Britain would not be abandoning Malta and her people, or of their being indifferent “to the economic consequences of the effect of defence cuts”. He had repeated the assurance already given about the level of employment in the dockyard until 1960 and again confirmed that pending investigation of the possibility of converting the dockyard to commercial use, no decision had been taken about its future thereafter. “I repeated”, Lennox-Boyd had said, “that we stood by the economic and financial commitments under the integration plan.”²⁷

When at the 17th August meeting four years later Sandys insisted that the 1958 offer was never taken up and had therefore lapsed, Borg Olivier said that after integration had been finally buried in the House of Commons, the offer of money was in fact repeated to him through the Governor. He was unable to accept it solely because he

²⁷ Extracts from Hansard, Commons, 25 Mar.1958, cols. 227, 230 and 243, enc., Annex A, 926/1183/48583.

did not have a majority in the Legislative Assembly. He said that he asked the Governor to hold immediate elections - which he felt sure he would win - and told him that "he would come back for the money after he had received his mandate." The constitution had already been suspended then but after the period of direct rule, elections had now been held, Borg Olivier had received his mandate, and here he was now, as he put it: "in the United Kingdom to negotiate for the money."

To dodge this, Sandys linked the offer to the integration proposal, but the Maltese side denied that. There was no denying that it had been the prospect of integration that had led Britain to offer such a deal in the first place, under a whole set of different assumptions. Lennox-Boyd had first proposed the plan on 25th March 1958, and then repeated it on 31st July 1958, after integration had been rejected. Victor Ragonesi reminded Duncan Sandys that on 31st July 1958 Lennox-Boyd had promised "to assist in balancing the budget on recurrent account so as to maintain and raise the standard of education and other social services." Some assistance had in fact been given, but not to the extent originally envisaged under the Mintoff and Lennox-Boyd package.

The Maltese delegation was after cash and infrastructural investments, hence their determined stand for aid on recurrent as well as capital expenditure. When Ragonesi reminded Sandys that Mr Macleod and Lord Perth had repeated promises of assistance towards the recurrent budget to Dr Olivier in 1960, Sandys waved that aside saying it was impossible for undertakings to be made to people who were not in office. What the Governor had told Dr Olivier in 1958, he added, was in effect that although both parties were against integration Her Majesty's Government were prepared to hold the offer open against the possibility of a change in Maltese opinion. "In fact integration had been and had continued to be rejected and the offer therefore was dead."

A harsh exchange then followed between Professor J. J. Cemoni and Mr Sandys, when the former recalled Lennox-Boyd's general pledge of financial assistance to develop the economy and to maintain

standards of social welfare. Sandys pointed out that integration implied a higher standard of social services in Malta than Malta could otherwise expect, from which Cremona deduced that Malta was being "punished by losing the advantages integration might have brought." This annoyed Sandys who said Malta "could not expect to have it both ways". Having rejected integration after weighing the advantages and disadvantages involved, the Maltese Government 'could hardly talk about having been "punished".'

In other words - Sandys seemed to be saying - stew in your own juice: since you did not want integration, you cannot expect now to benefit from advantages that would have accrued with Malta as an integral part of the UK, rather than as a separate state. There was almost an implication that the offer had been left on the table as a carrot, but only until such time as the Maltese decision to go their own way became irrevocable. With integration, Britain would not have needed to negotiate with a Maltese Government about defence facilities or anything else which it would have been in the power of the UK government to decide and to execute in as binding a fashion as it desired - on what would have been its own sovereign territory. That would have been worth a different price, certainly, a much higher one, but the original premise no longer applied.

Borg Olivier observed that the 1962 elections had shown that the Maltese people were in favour of independence. Whilst he could not say that the money previously offered "was *due* to Malta", Her Majesty's Government were "morally bound to give it". When he said that the offer had not been withdrawn, Sandys promptly repeated that it had been rejected.

The British side was ready to agree to a partial redeployment of funds granted for 1962-1964, but they wanted much more detailed submissions than they had so far received. When Ragonesi pleaded urgency, Sir John Martin's rejoinder was that "if the urgency was so great, five or six weeks had been allowed to slip away with no details forthcoming." In response to a special allocation for rebuilding the Opera House, Mr Galsworthy did not feel this was worthy of assistance from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. That,

he added, had already been paid for under the £30 million given in War Damage.

Although it may seem odd that the Nationalist Government would have brought up funding for an Opera House when the country was supposedly in dire straits, they must have reckoned that in all probability here was one last chance for having it rebuilt through overseas aid. It had after all been destroyed in the Second World War while Malta was devastated fighting on the side of the Allies; it had been the most outstanding piece of Victorian architecture from the British period in Malta; and the money dished out in War Damage was not nearly enough anyway. The Borg Olivier administration was also concerned about attracting tourists, and they would have regarded having the Opera House 'back' as an inducement to attract high-quality tourists to Malta and bolster up Valletta (Malta's capital city and Borg Olivier's constituency). The question about the Opera House at the 17th August meeting was immediately followed by a charge, from Ragonesi, that "the Colonial Government did nothing to encourage tourists." This was largely true of course, because Malta's 'tourists' had been the soldiers and sailors; it was only now that the tourist industry was suddenly dawning on Malta as a potential prime source of income. The Opera House issue limped on until the very end of the independence negotiations. Unfortunately for Malta and her people, no less than for her tourists, it was a classic, symbolic project which Borg Olivier's dogged persistence did not succeed in 'retrieving' as a visible and lasting parting gift to the George Cross Island from the Land of Hope and Glory.

The final and far more decisive stumbling block in this all-important encounter concerned the rundown and the future of the dockyard. It was a familiar enough topic. Borg Olivier deplored not so much the rundown as the fact that the changes to British defensive strategy had been made "overnight". There would be a major redeployment of forces in the course of which less emphasis would be placed on Malta. The Maltese side wanted to see the rundown postponed, but the Admiralty had already been persuaded to hold back the

beginning of the rundown until January 1963 and to extend its operation into 1967. Sandys had proposed a "joint study" of its effects but this, he noted, "had not aroused much interest in Malta." As for the dockyard itself, while the British side held that the changeover to Baileys had long been known, the Maltese side denied that. They had known that the dockyard would be "civilianised", but they had not learned of the plan to close the Naval Base, which employed 6,000 men, until the White Paper in February 1962. Ragonesi described Britain's act as "a breach of promise" since the Commander-in-Chief had promised, he said, that the rundown would be discussed. From now on the discussion went something like this:

Sandys: Discussion does not mean a Maltese right of veto.

Ragonesi: It does not mean a unilateral British act either... The Maltese are not prepared to be treated as guinea-pigs at the whim of British defence requirements. If no help could be forthcoming the Maltese and British had better call it a day.

Borg Olivier: If we are going to make any real impact on the worsening employment situation we need an additional grant of £1.8 million as well as the loan money.

Sandys: ... Let us not poison the atmosphere between the two countries. Let us join in a friendly spirit in the enquiry I have proposed. I would not have proposed it had I not felt there is some hope of a solution and UK assistance arising from it.

Borg Olivier: I won't be quarrelsome. I shall confine myself to the facts. I shall try to raise the money wherever else I can find it, but the British Government are leaving me in the lurch so far as immediate needs are concerned...

When Sandys again alluded to the offer of £100,000, Borg Olivier said that accepting that would have made him a laughing stock.

There seemed to be nothing further to be said and the meeting was unceremoniously wound up.²⁸

Other than the possibility of redeploying some grants, the only other marginally substantive outcome of this meeting was a delegation of power to Malta to raise funds from other countries (*sic*). That included "power to seek associate membership of the E.E.C. on the same lines as Greece". Arrangements had already been made for the Maltese Government to use the facilities offered by the British team of negotiators in Brussels. The Common Market was on the Maltese Government's agenda - but preferably without the need to have to seek delegation of powers before going ahead with whatever was required.

The British Government agreed that Malta's negotiations for associate membership of the E.E.C. need not depend on Britain's own accession, but they were prepared to negotiate with the Six "special arrangements" regarding the treatment of Maltese exports, if there were an interval between Britain's accession and Malta's association agreement. Otherwise Britain would have "to begin applying the common external tariff to their exports on our entry into the Community." Following instructions, Wakefield some days later wrote to Borg Olivier to say that Sandys was glad to grant authority for Malta to negotiate and conclude agreements of any kind with the Community and the authorities constituted thereunder,

subject only to their not impinging upon H.M.G.'s Defence and External Affairs commitments. This authority is not limited to circumstances in which Britain joins the Community. If, however, Malta became associated with the Community under Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome, whilst Britain did not join, a reconsideration of Anglo-Maltese trade relations would of course become necessary. I have been asked to add that ... the fact that H.M.G. have

²⁸ See the minutes of this meeting (ff.1-6) between Sandys, Borg Olivier and their respective delegations, held at the C.O., 17 Aug. 1962, 926/1183/48583.

delegated this authority to the Malta Governmenty is in no way a guarantee that the Six will themselves be prepared to negotiate with the Malta Government under Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome.²⁹

There can be no doubt at all that the meeting of 17th August convinced Borg Olivier and his delegation that the time for a definite break had come. That time was now. For two or three days, no doubt over some whiskeys at the Savoy, the members of the unnerved Maltese delegation would have exchanged views, discussed options and drafts, as they waited for the reply in writing to the various points raised - and which Sandys had promised to let Dr Olivier have "over the week-end". In fact, that letter from Sandys went out on the very same day in which the meeting had taken place. No time was lost to respond - but nothing had changed either. The die was cast. Neither guinea-pigs nor laughing-stocks, the Maltese had had enough: henceforth they would go it alone and do it their way. Her Majesty's Government could keep its offer of £100,000 - assuming that was not a red rag waved to the bull's face.

On the 20th August Dr Borg Olivier addressed two letters from his hotel to the Secretary of State, a long one and a short one.

In the lengthy one, one of the lengthiest he ever signed, Borg Olivier returned to the charge taking the points of the meeting one by one and giving his version or rebuttal of each. Few new points emerge from this letter, one being his claim that Governor Laycock had at first promised fresh elections to him in 1958. He reiterated that Lennox-Boyd as late as 31st July 1958 had confirmed the 'integration' offer, which could not but have been essentially based on what the British Government considered was needed by Malta "to undertake a development programme in order to start diversifying her economy and to raise the educational and social level of her people to what is reasonable by European standards."

²⁹ Min., J. M. Martin, 23 Aug. 1962, 926/1183/48583.

Malta's needs at present were "much greater", argued Borg Olivier, because a severe decline in Service spending in Malta was altogether unexpected in 1958. He corrected and elaborated on what he called a misconception of the grant/loan relativity in the total finances of the development plan, going back to the mid-fifties. The British contribution of £16.5 million by way of grant had to be viewed in relation to the total resources of £35.5 million, which included a loan from purely local sources of £4 million. Borg Olivier described the British way of dealing as "most unfair":

In March 1958 Her Majesty's Government considered that Malta needed a grant of £25 million for capital development alone over the next five years. It is with the latter amount that the £16.5 million grant referred to in your letter should really be compared. As regards the unspent balance of £12 million referred to in your letter, I think it was made clear during my talks with you that, in the light of the very small success achieved, if at all, in the performance of the development plan and having regard especially to the envisaged drastic run-down in defence expenditure in Malta, resort to further loans is bound to place an excessive burden on the already strained economy of the Island... what cannot but be considered by all Malta and her friends as most unfair is that the new defence policy, which at this juncture may spell disaster for the Island, should be put into effect without prior agreement with the Government of Malta on appropriate remedial measures and before adequate plans for the absorption of the labour to be shed meet with reasonable success...

Borg Olivier flatly and significantly refused to accept any limitation on his requests for a wider delegation of power in the field of external affairs - there had been none during the meeting of 17th August - particularly Malta's right to deal directly with the E.E.C.:

I wish to stress that our request in connection with the European Economic Community is for full authority to

negotiate and conclude agreements of any kind with that Community and the authorities constituted thereunder, and I earnestly trust that when the final document embodying the delegation of power under section 83 of the Constitution is drawn up, it will contain a provision on these lines. Indeed at the meeting held on 17th August 1962, you made no reference to any limitation based on Britain's participation in the Community such as is contained in the third paragraph before last of your letter, nor, in my view, is any such limitation warranted.

A condensed reassertion of the points he had made in his national broadcast on the eve of his departure for London, bringing to mind Fortunato Mizzi's strident "Appello" addressed to the Maltese from London in 1886 on the eve of the attainment of Representative Government, the two concluding paragraphs of Borg Olivier's letter have all the power of shot. They provide as succinct a reassertion of the kernel of Maltese anti-colonial nationalism, albeit in a slightly more controlled phraseology than one might have expected to hear in its heyday, when constitutions once given were subsequently withdrawn. But now a final heyday was clearly at hand; and there would be less Royal Navy ships around "to dirty the harbour". In carefully thought out words, Britain is told firmly and squarely that Malta had served British needs for much too long. The Maltese now felt that they would be better off without her tutelage. Colonial rule had acted as a restraint on Maltese development whereas in full freedom Malta was confident that she would thrive and prosper. In return for a golden handshake by Britain as befitted the occasion, Maltese friendship was held forth - an olive branch not to be freely dispensed with:

As you well know, Malta has been tied down to a fortress economy ever since her connection with Britain and that economy cannot now be diversified overnight. It should be borne in mind that in respect of Malta the fortress concept has always prevailed under British rule and this had in fact considerably hampered and delayed our constitutional progress and conditioned the whole of our economy. Britain

Sheet 4.



The recent talks have indeed had an unfortunate outcome, but at least they must certainly have served to bring home to you the grave difficulties which confront my Government and people. I have always been confident - and you know that I have been given a clear mandate in respect of independence - that we will be in a better position to face those problems if we have full freedom of action in the shaping of Malta's future as an independent member of the Commonwealth. The experience which I have gained during my prolonged talks has pressed on me the necessity and importance of greater urgency in this matter. In the circumstances I have consulted my Cabinet colleagues and I have their full support in the pursuit of independence as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely
Borg Olivier

20th August 1962.

Dear Secretary of State,

I have received your letter of the 17th August 1962, on the subject of our talks.

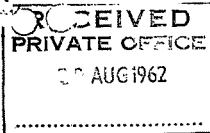
With reference to the second paragraph of your letter, I wish to stress once more the basic point, clearly made in my memorandum of the 25th July 1962, that my request is essentially one, i.e. the operation of the financial arrangements proposed by Her Majesty's Government for Malta on the 25th March 1958, and contained in the statement made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on that date. The other issues to which you make reference in that paragraph are merely some of the contemplated features of the forthcoming estimates framed on the basis of Her Majesty's Government's contingent agreement to the operation of those financial arrangements for the remaining period of the current development plan. This, I suggest, is how (b) in the second paragraph of your letter is to be understood.

You state in your letter that the financial assistance offered in 1958 was an integral part of proposals designed to cover an interim period of five years pending a final decision on whether Malta should be integrated with the United Kingdom and you add that those proposals were not accepted by the then Government of Malta and consequently lapsed. It appears that you have overlooked the point, emphasised by me, that the offer was not connected solely with integration and this is borne out not only by the terms of the offer itself but also by the fact that when, after Mr. Mintoff's resignation, Governor Sir Robert Laycock invited me to form a government, he extended the offer to me and he knew full well that I was engaged in a very active and sustained campaign against integration in accordance with my Party's electoral manifesto. I advised the Governor to hold immediate elections; adding that, if elected, I would then come forward for the money. Although at first promised, elections were eventually not held and a period of strict colonial administration followed. At the first subsequent elections held in Malta my Party was returned to power.

The offer, which was confirmed by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on the 31st July 1958, could not but have been essentially based on what Her Majesty's Government considered was needed by Malta to undertake a development programme in order to start diversifying her economy and to raise the educational and social level of her people to what is reasonable by European standards. I cannot see how it can conceivably be said that financial contribution on that

The Right Honourable Duncan Sandys, M.P.,
 Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
 and for the Colonies.

Borg Olivier's letter to
 Sandys of 20th August
 1962 restating and
 justifying Malta's case.



SAVOY HOTEL,
London, W.C.2.

20th August 1962.

Sir,

On behalf of the Government and People of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, I have the honour to invoke for my country the right to be an independent State.

I request you therefore to fix as a matter of urgency a date for the Maltese Islands' independence within the Commonwealth.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
and for the Colonies.

Dr Borg Olivier's letter of 20th August to the Colonial Secretary invoking for his country "the right to be an independent State", and the corrected draft of a reply by Mr Sandys on the day.



Colonial Office,
~~The Church House,~~
~~Great Smith Street,~~
London, S. W. 1.


20th August, 1962.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of to-day's date,
(17) in which you ask that Malta should be granted
independence.

~~While I am surprised you did not formally~~
~~raise this important issue with me in our recent~~
~~talks,~~ I shall be pleased to arrange a meeting
between our two Governments, as soon as
practicable, to consider your proposal.

~~*Yours sincerely*~~


The Hon. Borg Olivier.

Communicated
P.S. Since I understand you ~~circulated~~ to the
press the contents of your letter to me,
I am likewise publishing my reply.

cannot now, without seriously jeopardising the traditional good relationship between the two countries, shed her responsibilities towards Malta's economy so lightly and improvidently.

The outcome of the recent talks had been indeed unfortunate, Borg Olivier continued to Sandys, but at least they must certainly have served

to bring home to you the grave difficulties which confront my Government and people. I have always been confident - and you know that I have been given a clear mandate in respect of independence - that we will be in a better position to face those problems if we have full freedom of action in the shaping of Malta's future as an independent member of the Commonwealth. The experience which I have gained during my prolonged talks has pressed on me the necessity and importance of greater urgency in this matter. In the circumstances I have consulted my Cabinet colleagues and I have their full support in the pursuit of independence as a matter of urgency.³⁰

The long letter in fact provided the rationale behind the short and much more historic one, bearing the same date. In the shorter letter, so much more typically epigrammatic of him, Borg Olivier said that after having consulted his Cabinet colleagues he was making a formal and urgent request to Britain. Obviously coordinated in advance by Borg Olivier and his advisers so as to be a more poignant and historic document all to itself, it read simply as follows:

On behalf of the Government and People of the Island of Malta and its Dependencies, I have the honour to invoke for my country the right to be an independent State.

³⁰ Borg Olivier/Sandys, Savoy Hotel, London, W.C.2, 20 Aug. 1962, CO 926/1183/48583. The letter starting 'Dear Secretary of State' was registered at the Colonial Secretary's private office on the day.

I request you therefore to fix as a matter of urgency a date for the Maltese Islands' independence within the Commonwealth.³¹

With this formal demand for Independence - urgently - placed before Britain by the Maltese Government, all the earlier 'manifesto' talk of independence suddenly became acutely real.

Sandys replied to Borg Olivier's letter of 20th August on the very same day. Thanking him for his letter bearing that day's date, in which he asked that Malta should be granted independence, Sandys added simply: "I shall be pleased to arrange a meeting between our two Governments, as soon as practicable, to consider your proposal."³² There was a little less *sang froid* in the draft of the letter which Sandys had intended sending Borg Olivier. In this Sandys expressed "surprise" at the fact that Borg Olivier had not formally raised "this important issue" with him "in our recent talks". This significant qualifying clause expressing "surprise" was crossed out from the draft, as was the less formal "yours sincerely". There was also a *post script*: "Since I understand you communicated to the press the contents of your letter to me, I am likewise publishing my reply."³³

Disappointed by the dismal failure of the financial talks, Borg Olivier seemed challenged, if not gratified, by the prospect of a new era dawning on Malta through independence from Britain. The cloud had a silver lining. Reared as a Nationalist, in a Nationalist family of long standing from Valletta, he had come to appreciate British

³¹ Borg Olivier/Sandys, Savoy Hotel, London, W.C. 2, 20 Aug. 1962, CO 926/1309/48655.

³² Sandys/Borg Olivier, 20 Aug. 1962. The text of this was published in *The Scotsman*, 21 Aug. 1962, under the heading "Sandys replies".

³³ Draft letter, Sandys/Borg Olivier, 20 Aug. 1962, 926/1309/48655. This draft is noteworthy for the parts crossed out as these betray a certain annoyance on the part of the Secretary of State. It seems he had not anticipated such a sharp and immediate reaction from the Maltese prime minister.

liberal norms but not at the expense of patriotic ones. A Borg Olivier ancestor bearing the same surname was Malta's Chief Justice when the British had first arrived in Malta, while the prime minister's paternal uncle had been a fiery Senator and a Speaker in the 1920s. Dr Borg Olivier had led the political opposition to Mr Mintoff's quest for Malta's integration with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the mid-fifties, and then had the uncommon satisfaction of gleefully seconding Mr Mintoff's own parliamentary resolution to "break with Britain" in December 1957 when the whole integration campaign flopped.

Now Borg Olivier's financial talks had also flopped. He set the stakes at £25 million in grants over five years, a package offered to Mintoff at the time of Integration, arguing that it was fallacious to claim that some £12 million of development aid was still unspent. Of that, £5 million was available as loan: no further loans would be feasible. Of the balance of £7 million, £5 million was in respect of projects in progress and £2 were for new schemes which the Colonial Office had not yet approved or improved. On top of all that, Malta now faced the rundown, growing unemployment, economic destabilization. No Maltese Government ever had to confront so formidable a challenge, Borg Olivier held. The specific claims made mainly for 1964/1965 were for additional grants totalling nearly £4 million, to subsidize education, health and social service costs, and for new employment-generating projects, together with a conversion of £5 million from loan to grant. Borg Olivier limited himself to British Government funding, as broken down in grants and loans under the still operative 1959-1964 development plan. These excluded loans totaling £7,250,000, of which about £2,250,000 had been paid to Bailey (Malta) Ltd., for the modernization of the dockyard. All told, the Maltese government expected Britain to grant Malta a further nine million pounds or so. After eight weeks of haggling, the only tangible cash offer Borg Olivier got, one which he indignantly turned down, was for an additional £100,000.

Before leaving London in that unusually long month of August 1962, while recovering from a bout of flu, Borg Olivier gave the most widely-reported press conference of his life. It featured in all sections

of the British press, from Conservative to Communist; even *Izvestiya* in Moscow found space for it.³⁴ On the same day that he had addressed the two 'independence' letters to Duncan Sandys, just before returning to Malta Borg Olivier made his demand for Independence known to the world.

Giving the reasons for it, he held out a brighter prospect for a Malta independent of Britain than some of his own countrymen would have been keen to endorse at the time. At home, the Mintoff-led Labour opposition were critical of Borg Oliver for not having acted faster and asked for more; other parties were circumspect and wary of what the future might hold if Malta set sail in what Governor Dorman would soon describe as stormy weather - rough seas under a dark sky. "Worse I feel we can never be", stated Dr Borg Olivier confidently when announcing Malta's official demand for independence on the day that he made it. "Now I shall fight tooth and nail for independence", he stated.

Press comment in Britain about this turn of events veered between admiration on the one hand and commiseration on the other. Dr Borg Olivier, never easily ruffled, put as bold a face on it as he could.

One of the British diplomatic correspondents most *au courant* with Maltese affairs - and who knew the Commonwealth inside out - was Patrick Keatley of *The Guardian*. Keatley was among the journalists present for Borg Olivier's press conference at the Savoy. As he walked into the conference room at his West End hotel, Borg Olivier

³⁴ *Izvestiya* published a Tass report under the headline "Fruitless Talks", 21 Aug. 1962, translated and relayed to the F.O. by the British embassy in Moscow, enc. Smith/Youde, 22 Aug. 1962, 926/1179/48655. It reported Borg Olivier as saying that Britain had even failed to comply with a request for the "comparatively small sum" of £2,163,000, and that was why the talks had been "fruitless". It also reported Malta's official demand for independence. That such a report was published "when the papers were once again almost entirely filled with the cosmonauts", commented Mr H.F.T.Smith from Moscow, was "indicative of Soviet interest in developments."

was "the same polished and urbane figure" which Whitehall had come to know well over the years, Keatley observed; "but when he spoke it was the voice of an exasperated man at the end of his tether."

Borg Olivier set out his case "crisply and bitterly", according to Keatley: he and his Cabinet on coming to power had inherited a five-year development plan from the colonial administration which, in Borg Olivier's view, was proving to be woefully inadequate. It had provided so far 750 new jobs against a target of 7,500, while the budget on current account was showing a deficit. In recent years, Borg Olivier said, Malta had been living "from hand to mouth". The reserves of £830,000 in 1958 had changed into a deficit of £450,000 in 1962. The upshot of eight weeks of negotiations in London, interrupted by the change of Colonial Secretary from Maudling to Sandys, was the offer of a sum of £100,000 in assistance for the current budget. This Borg Olivier regarded as "not merely a dusty answer but an insult." Although Malta had already raised her annual revenues by £1.25 million through heavier taxes, there was still a shortfall of over £2 million in recurrent expenditure. Worse still, of course, were the omens surrounding the closure of the Naval Base as a result of the Defence White Paper, and Borg Olivier would have wanted to make provisions to counter the anticipated rise in unemployment. It was in the light of all this that the offer of £100,000 was seen as preposterous. "I could not accept such a meagre sum", Borg Olivier told the press. And he added pointedly: "I did not come here to make a silver collection."³⁵

Practically every British newspaper picked up this "sniffy" remark, which to a colonial subject would have evoked Poppy Day, the

³⁵ Patrick Keatley, "Immediate Freedom Demand by Malta", *The Guardian*, 21 Aug. 1962. In an editorial comment, "Malta's Banker", *The Guardian* concluded that it was "hardly reasonable to ask that Britain's economic assistance to Malta should continue at the present rate" if Malta became independent and Britain could no longer "exercise any control over its application."

RSPCA or some such Empire-associated jamboree - a sixpence in return for a poppy stuck to your lapel. Borg Olivier also hoped to be better positioned to attract overseas aid from sources other than Britain if and when Malta would be an independent state. He saw himself, at this stage, almost at one with Mintoff, who had been led to favour independence after other approaches had failed to bear fruit. Dr Borg Olivier freely admitted this:

My predecessor, Mr Mintoff, went through the same kind of stress. I am now invoking the right of my people to independence as a matter of urgency. Malta has been left in the lurch - abandoned in her great hour of need. It seems so very strange that this should happen to the George Cross island which helped to win the last war... We have a few friends still, I feel, especially those who knew Malta in the war years. Up to now we could not approach these countries - our friends in the West - who have helped many other countries. We have not resorted to violence in order to achieve independence although others have.

This was probably a reference to some of the non-European ex-colonies and indeed Cyprus, but it could have also been a dig at Mintoff who in 1958 had resigned and dramatically taken his new-found anti-British slogans to the streets. While renouncing violence, Borg Olivier emphasised that he would "fight tooth and nail" for independence. According to John Dickie of *The Daily Mail*, Borg Olivier seemed to underline the comparison between certain African territories which had raced to independence despite a short apprenticeship in self-government and Malta which had produced a succession of premiers and a skilled European-style administration. "He left his audience wondering whether Malta's pace would have been quicker if the Maltese had been a black African community."³⁶

³⁶ John Dickie, "Malta demands freedom - Britain has left us in the lurch says Premier", *Daily Mail*, 21 Aug. 1962.

Borg Olivier was fully aware of the need for economic diversification. The *Birmingham Post* reported him as saying that

Without independence, we were obliged, for more than a century and a half, to accept a situation where the economy of Malta must depend solely and exclusively on defence needs. Because of these needs, we could never explore other avenues.³⁷

A fair solution would be not to put into effect the new defence policy as regards Malta before adequate plans for the absorption of the labour to be shed are yielding results, Borg Olivier said. It was in his view, reported *The Scotsman*, "quite unfair that the transition from a fortress economy to a civil one should, after a century and a half of British rule, operate so as to lower the standard of living."

Responding to this comment editorially, the newspaper assumed that Dr Olivier had been expecting too much. While appreciating the fact that the British Government had at least agreed to postpone the initial discharges and to spread the rundown over an additional year, and offered a technical redeployment of grant and loan moneys on projects still to be agreed on the capital side, it wondered if Borg Olivier recognised that changes in strategic concepts had unpleasant consequences in Britain too, mentioning as an example the unemployment caused by the abandonment of the Blue Water missile. At the same time, however, Borg Olivier's refusal to accept loan money intended for investment in order to meet current commitments was regarded as reasonable.³⁸

³⁷ 'Malta asks for Freedom - "Britain Slams the Door"', *The Birmingham Post*, 21 Aug. 1962.

³⁸ "Malta Demands Freedom - Dr Olivier speaks of bitter disillusionment with Britain - "Door slammed on my country", *The Scotsman*, 21 Aug. 1962. "The real difficulty seems to be", the *Scotsman* concluded in its editorial about "Malta's difficulties" carried on the same day as the report, "that Dr Borg Olivier has been expecting too much."

MALTA DEMANDS FREEDOM

Dr Olivier speaks of bitter disillusionment with Britain

"DOOR SLAMMED ON MY COUNTRY"

FROM A COMMONWEALTH CORRESPONDENT

LONDON, Monday

Dr Borg Olivier, Prime Minister of Malta, made a formal demand today for his country's independence within the Commonwealth. In a letter to Mr Duncan Sandys, Commonwealth Relations and Colonial Secretary, he asked that the matter be treated with the greatest urgency.

The demand follows the unsuccessful talks here at which Dr Olivier has been asking Britain for increased economic assistance. At a Press conference this evening the Premier spoke of his "bitter disillusionment" with Britain.

Malta had been left in the lurch, he said. "We have been abandoned in the hour of our greatest need." "The door has been slammed on my country, but at the same time it has been opened wide to elements which are unfriendly to N.A.T.O. in Malta."

The Maltese Government have been granted immediate powers to seek economic aid from whatever countries they like. Dr Olivier said that he hoped that the United States, West Germany, France and Italy might help. He pointed out that Cyprus, with a population not much larger than Malta's, had received substantial amounts of foreign aid since independence.

He had also been given the go-ahead to apply to the European Common Market for Malta's association with the E.C. He would make such an application immediately under Article 238 of the Rome Treaty.

NO VIOLENCE FORECAST

Tooth-and-nail fight

Dr Olivier said that he would "fight tooth and nail" for independence within the Commonwealth. He did not, however, envisage having to resort to violence.

Independence has always been the official policy of Dr Olivier's Nationalist Party. But the outcome of these latest talks has precipitated his demand. "We shall be in a better position to face the grave problems besetting our country if we have full freedom of action in the shaping of Malta's future as an independent member of the Commonwealth," he said today.

What Dr Olivier had been seeking was implementation of offers made by Britain in 1958. He was told then, after the resignation of Sir Don Minniford, Labour Government, that if he would take office as Premier, Britain would contribute £25 million towards a five-year development plan.

"I advised the Governor to hold an immediate election and added that, as if he were elected, I would come forward for the money," said Dr Olivier.

"Although at first postponed, elections were eventually held and a majority of strict Colonial administration followed."

£100,000 "MEASURE"

"Not here for silver"

Now that elections had been held, he felt Britain should renew the offer. But Sir Sandys said that, as it had not been taken up at the time, it had now lapsed. In 1961, the Premier's request for £25 million immediately, he was offered £10 million



Dr Borg Olivier

"A fair solution," said Dr Olivier, "would be not to put into effect the new defence policy as regards Malta before adequate plans for the absorption of the labour to be shed are yielding results. It is in my view quite unfair that the transition from a fortress economy to a civil one should, after a century and a half of British rule, operate so as to lower the standard of living."

Asked what benefits he thought independence could bring to his chronically unviable little island, the Premier said: "Worse than we are, I feel, we can never be. After eight weeks in London he returns to Malta today to prepare his Budget."

The Colonial Office had no comment tonight on Dr Olivier's statement. They had not been favoured with a copy, a spokesman said.

SANDYS REPLIES

The following letter has been sent by Mr Sandys to Dr Olivier, dated August 20:

"Dear Prime Minister—Thank you for your letter of today's date, in which you asked that Malta should be granted independence. I shall be pleased to arrange a meeting between our two Governments, as soon as practicable, to consider your proposal."

MALTA DEMAND FOR INDEPENDENCE

THREAT TO FIGHT "TOOTH AND NAIL" IF REQUEST REFUSED

From Our Commonwealth Correspondent

Because of failure during eight weeks in London to reach agreement with the British Government on financial aid the Prime Minister of Malta, Dr. G. Borg Olivier, has put in a formal request for independence for Malta within the Commonwealth. He did so in a letter sent yesterday to Mr. Sandys, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Commonwealth Relations.

Mr. Sandys replied yesterday:—"Dear Prime Minister, thank you for your letter of today's date, in which you asked that Malta should be granted independence. I shall be pleased to arrange a meeting between our two Governments, as soon as practicable, to consider your proposal."

At a press conference, Dr. Borg Olivier said: "I am afraid that the door has been slammed on my country. At the same time it has been opened wide to elements which are unfriendly to Nato in Malta. The unfortunate outcome of these talks has served to convince me even more that we shall be in a better position to face the grave problems besetting our country if we have full freedom of action in the shaping of Malta's future as an independent member of the Commonwealth, which is after all the platform on which I won the recent election."

Dr. Borg Olivier said that he had sought help from Sir Sandys for both foreign economic aid, and association with the Commonwealth. "I thought that now being a member of the Commonwealth, the Government of Malta would be able to obtain aid from the United States, Italy, and France as possible providers. He also pointed out that a Maltese Minister had already made a tentative approach by the Common Market countries in Brussels."

NO VIOLENCE

"We have not resorted to violence to achieve independence. I have a high regard for the British people, who have received extensive aid only since they achieved independence for their island, whose population is not much larger than ours," the Prime Minister remarked, adding that he did not think it would be necessary to resort to violence in Malta. Nor did he think that economic viability was any longer an essential condition for independence. In view of Malta's present difficulties, he commented: "Woe! I feel we can never be."

If his demand for independence was refused, he would not resist, but would fight "tooth and nail" for independence. Malta had hitherto been prevented from sharing her own destiny. "If we are independent we will at last be able to react to the help of friends, and I presume they should be ready to help Malta, the George Cross island which helped them to win the last war."

In a statement Dr. Borg Olivier said that too many problems confronted him when he took office in March—rising unemployment, which now stood at 5,600, or 6 per cent of the working population, and the threat of large-scale discharge from service employment in consequence of the Defence White Paper.

"ONLY 750 NEW JOBS"

The 1955 five-year development plan launched by the Colonial Office administration was intended to provide 7,500 new jobs by 1964. So far only 750 had been created.

The Prime Minister explained that he had sought assistance from Britain both for a five-year development plan, and to balance his recurrent budget. This Government, he said, had inherited a deficit of £45,000. "Afterhanding the Government's assistance to my on taking office that there was a balance."

In his talks with Mr. Sandys he had asked for £25 million for development, and "substantial" pension contributions. In 1961, when he was in London, he had asked for £25 million for development, and "substantial" pension contributions. In 1961, when he was in London, he had asked for £25 million for development, and "substantial" pension contributions.

Minister of Labour Party Government, which resigned at that time over the unattractive dispute. The offer, Dr. Borg Olivier said, had been received to him when he had been invited to take office after Mr. Minniford's resignation, but as he was in a minority in the Legislature he had advised the Governor to hold elections, adding that if elected he would "come forward for the money."

SERVICE SPENDING

"I cannot see how it can conceivably be said that financial contribution on this basis is not required on the eve of a prospective severe decline in service spending in Malta," but the offer, I am told by the Secretary of State, had not been accepted because it was not accepted by the then Government of Malta.

The money required from Britain for the recurrent budget in the present financial year would have been £1,100,000. £1,400,000 (half of total cost of education), £57,152 (One-quarter of total cost of health services).

Total £1,557,152

This would have enabled Malta to meet an estimated deficit of about £1,500,000 and provide for a reserve.

He had also asked for £1,750,000 to add to £2m. unspent under the present development plan, for new works costing £1,750,000 to create immediate employment for about 2,500 more.

Finally, he had sought conversion of about £2m. Exchequer loan into a grant to cover the cost of certain projects.

"These proposals," he added, "have not been accepted by Sir Sandys's Government on the grounds that Malta has no competent balance of £12m. which, in



Dr. Borg Olivier at yesterday's conference.

view, is sufficient to finance a substantial increase in the level of development expenditure from this year and next. This is a pity. The real position is that out of the £12m. £2m. are available as loans. In Malta's present circumstances credit to further loans is bound to place an excessive burden on the already strained economy of the island. £5m. of the balance of £7m. are in respect of projects to projects which do not allow for any increase in employment and £2m. are for new schemes which may or may not be approved by the Colonial Office."

Dr. Borg Olivier said that Mr. Sandys had offered only "a technical operation of more redeployment of grant and loan money on grounds to be agreed on the capital side, and £100,000 on the recurrent side. He said that he would not accept such a measure now. I did not come here to make a silver collection."

The prominent coverage given in all sections of the British press to Dr Borg Olivier's international press conference at the Savoy Hotel on 20th August 1962 announcing his demand to the British Government, on that day, for Malta's independence. These newspaper reports are from (left) *The Scotsman* and (right) from *The Times*.

The Northern Daily suggested a White Paper setting forth the current financial position and a definite plan for future development.³⁹

Although he said he believed Malta could become economically viable, Borg Olivier understandably was not sure of the extent or the pace at which such a turn-around could be achieved without overseas aid. His reference to "our friends in the West", who had known Malta "in the war years", could very well have been directed at the two countries which had dropped most bombs there, Italy and Germany, but he was probably thinking mainly of the U.S.A., and possibly of NATO, which had its Allied Forces Mediterranean headquartered in Malta, at Floriana. He would also have had in mind, certainly, a steady gravitation towards the European Economic Community. Earlier, reported *The Daily Express*, Dr Olivier had announced his intention to seek urgent talks in Brussels for Malta to become an associate member of the Common Market.⁴⁰

There were, he believed, practical reasons for hoping that aid might come from the United States, Western Germany, France and Italy in particular. In the course of the press conference Borg Olivier specifically mentioned the Common Market. It was a plain fact, he noted by way of reassurance to the doubtful, that Archbishop Makarios and his government had only been able to negotiate outside aid after achieving political independence from Britain. The Maltese people thus had before them the tangible example of

³⁹ In an editorial called "Malta Muddle" accompanying its news report on 21 Aug., *The Northern Daily* concluded that Britain must aim to make the Maltese financially independent; at the same time, "the Maltese themselves might take some pains to reconcile their own bitter internal differences and get on with the job in hand." This paper's concern about a White Paper would be catered for by the Joint Study and the Stolper reports, as well as the 1964/1969 Development Plan itself.

⁴⁰ "WE GO! Malta's angry Premier demands independence after aid snub", *The Daily Express*, 21 Aug. 1962.

Malta demands freedom

BRITAIN
HAS
LEFT US
IN THE
LURCH
SAYS
PREMIER

By JOHN DICKIE

DR. Borg Olivier, Premier of Malta, yesterday demanded independence for his island as "a matter of urgency."

He accused Britain of leaving his people in the lurch and said: "Malta was abandoned in her hour of need."

"Malta asked Britain for what was offered four years ago, but this was refused."

This new colonial crisis for the Government comes after eight weeks' talks which ended with Dr. Olivier walking out from his last meeting with Mr. Duncan Sandys, Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary.

"The Maltese Premier wanted substantial economic aid to meet the unemployment caused by Britain's defence policy of running down the island's naval base. It was refused."

Unfriendly

At a Press conference in London Dr. Olivier said: "I mean to fight tooth and nail for independence."

"I am afraid that the door has been slammed on my country, but at the same time it has been opened wide to elements which are unfriendly to NATO in Malta."

He had asked for £2,163,823 from Britain for the recurrent budget apart from capital for a new work project and the conversion of "a £2,000,000 Exchequer loan to a grant. Instead he was offered only £100,000 on the recurrent side."

"Needless to say, I could not accept such a meagre sum," he said. "I did not come here to make a silver collection."

But he was undaunted at the economic prospect of 250,000 people living in the George Cross Island. "Worse, I feel, we can never be."

"So far lack of independence has prevented Malta from adapting her destiny according to her needs. If we are independent we will at least be able to resort to the help of friends, and I must say we have a few left."

Dr. Olivier said that if his country were independent the people must take their chance to turn it into a tourist resort.



DR. OLIVIER
"No silver collection"

He dismissed as unnecessary the use of violence to get independence. "I am thinking of Makarios."

He mentioned Maltese countries doing so much for emergent territories and talked of people who only a few years ago thought they would never be eligible for independence being helped to their goal.

Apprenticeship

This seemed to underline the comparison between certain African territories which have passed to independence despite a short apprenticeship in self-government and Malta which has produced a succession of Premiers and a skilled European-style administration.

He left his audience wondering whether Maltese pace would have been quicker if the Maltese had been a black African community.

Dr. Olivier's return to Malta with the unmitigated feeling of the island being abandoned after a century and a half as a fortress for Britain, had two considerations, however.

He said he had been given authority to seek aid from "any country I like." He emphasised that he would look to the West. He also said Mr. Sandys had empowered him "to approach directly the Bar for association with the Common Market under Section 238 of the Rome Treaty—that is the same way as Greece."

Last night in a letter to Dr. Olivier replying to the independence demand, Mr. Sandys said he would be pleased to arrange a meeting.

WE GO!

Malta's angry Premier demands independence after aid snub

Express Political Correspondent

MALTA—the George Cross island fortress of the Second German War—is virtually washing its hands of Britain after a bitter wrangle over aid.

Dr. Borg Olivier, the island's Premier, furious over the Government's tough turn-down, yesterday demanded the Colony's immediate freedom as an independent member of the Commonwealth.

And late last night, Mr. Duncan Sandys, the Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, agreed to an early independence conference.

He said he would tell Dr. Olivier that a meeting would be arranged "as soon as practicable."

Earlier Dr. Olivier, in London, had announced his intention to seek urgent talks in Brussels for Malta to become an associate member of the Common Market.

Also he planned to look for other Western countries to pull the island's economy out of the red.

Appeal

Dr. Olivier outlined these measures after a bitter tirade. "I did not come here to make a silver collection"—at the Government's expense.

The crisis exploded over Dr. Olivier's appeal to Mr. Sandys for about £7,000,000 in short and long term aid.

After keeping Dr. Olivier on his London campaign for eight weeks Mr. Sandys did come up with an offer of only £100,000.

The Government claims that £100,000 is still part of an old development programme. The sum of the talks is likely to leave a backlog of bitterness between Malta and Britain for many years to come.

Dr. Olivier closed his hand had been forced into his post-independence, and stated: "Now I shall fight tooth and nail for independence."



DR. OLIVIER
"No silver collection"

Other reports of Borg Olivier's 'independence' press conference in (above, left) *The Daily Mail* and (right) *The Daily Express* of 21st August 1962.

Cyprus, which was similar to Malta in terms of democratic government, size and population. Further reassurance of a more emotional bent came in the form of a Maltese saying, translated literally into English: "worse than we are - I feel we can never be." (*Ma nistghux inkunu aghar milli ahna.*) It was, in Keatley's words, an "emotional, half-grammatical declaration, spluttered out with an accompanying gesture of defiance and despair."

A warning (or so Borg Olivier reckoned) came towards the end of the press conference when Malta's premier hinted darkly at what Britain's want of magnanimity towards Malta could lead to in the sphere of international politics. "I am afraid the door has been slammed on my country at these London talks", Borg Olivier said. "But at the same time it has been opened wide to elements which are unfriendly to NATO in Malta." This comment, reported in more than one British newspaper, was clearly a reference to the Malta Labour Party which, under Mintoff's dynamic and demagogic leadership, had veered towards positions of neutrality and non-alignment, courting states and movements which were openly critical of the West in general and of military alliances such as NATO in particular. In the prevailing Cold War context of ideological-military super-power blocs, such a remark from an aspiring new state on Europe's southern-most flank, was meant to strike a red button. In some quarters it was interpreted as a threat, in others as a ploy, a bluff or simply a miscalculation, but it did not fail to make its mark. A number of correspondents could not fathom who, other than the Soviet Union, might be interested in befriending or using Malta, although that was not a shift to be encouraged. They rather disregarded the southern shores of the Mediterranean as a potential source of trouble that could destabilize the region: Algeria was probably too far away to figure in any Malta equation and, like Tunisia, which was quieter, it was within the French ambit, whereas Libya still seemed safely under Anglo-American patronage, and ambitious Egypt nonetheless had enough problems of its own. To the East, the Arab-Israeli conflict simmered still.

Dr Borg Olivier saw no reason why "at least in the first place" Malta

should not go to Western countries for aid, reported the *Yorkshire Post*; and Borg Olivier thought they would give consideration to her needs. "Malta is in the centre of the Mediterranean and I cannot visualize a situation where the threat of Communism coming from Africa to Europe could be allowed to drift."⁴¹ According to *The Financial Times*, Borg Olivier indicated that his mandate did not prevent him from seeking help from non-Western countries if it should prove necessary. Meanwhile Mintoff was taunting Borg Olivier at the "snail's pace" with which he was approaching independence. Had it been for him, *The Daily Telegraph* reported from Valletta, he would have had Malta both independent and out of the Commonwealth by now. Unemployment in Malta by August 1962 had climbed to 6% of the working population, that is 5, 600 workers out of a job; this was regarded as a peak in the post-war era.⁴²

Having made the point that with full freedom of action Malta would be in a better position to tackle her grave problems, on the following day Borg Olivier was reported as having said that it would be "a great relief to become independent" (*The Times*), that he was "not bitter" about the British Government's attitude (*Yorkshire Post*), and that his visit to London had "speeded up my request a little" (*Daily Telegraph*).

Over the week-end, *The Economist*, *The Observer* and *The New Statesman* were some publications which commented editorially about the Malta situation, variously comparing it to that in Aden, Iceland and Southern European countries from Portugal south of

⁴¹ 'G.C. Island Wants Her Freedom - "Matter of urgency", says Malta Premier - Talks to be held', *The Yorkshire Post*, 21 Aug. 1962.

⁴² "Malta crisis as aid talks break down", *The Sunday Telegraph*, 19 Aug. 1962; and see R.H.C.Steed, "Malta wants Independence - Britain refused £8¾ m. aid request", *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 Aug. 1962. See also 'Malta Demand for Independence - Threat to Fight "Tooth and Nail" if Request Refused', *The Times*, 21 Aug. 1962.

the Tagus to the Greek Islands.⁴³ As for continental Europe, Italy and West Germany were the countries most mentioned as possible helpers of Malta in future. Malta was referred to as "the obsolete fortress" and Borg Olivier as having "overplayed his hand", although Britain had "a debt of honour" to meet. Malta, it was claimed, had the highest *per capita* rate of assistance from colonial welfare and development funds for any dependent territory for the years 1959-1964. Borg Olivier had "a large, bitter and active Opposition ready to wring every shred of advantage from his difficulties" but he had been "driven into using some of Mr Mintoff's weapons." Whereas however Mintoff "could at least hint that he would play off East and West", Borg Olivier and his backers could hardly go to Moscow and they had "nothing to offer anyone else." Not absent from some of the editorial reasoning was a touch of resentment at Malta's daring: what, "if anything", did Malta stand to gain by independence? To the pro-Labour *New Statesman*, the basic problems of Malta and Aden were "identical", but Aden retained its value whereas Malta was no longer necessary to British strategy:

Since 1957, when Duncan Sandys, then Minister of Defence, brusquely told the Maltese cabinet that the navy was to cut its establishment in Valletta, the Maltese problem has been how to maintain its standards of life when the predominant

⁴³ In 1963 the former British colony of Aden (at the mouth of the Red Sea in the Gulf of Aden where this meets the Arabian Sea just across from the Horn of Africa) joined the Federation of South Arabia, after a short stint of self-government. Although its situation was not quite like that of Malta - it already had an oil refinery in 1953, and offered free port facilities - Aden was or had been, like Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Singapore and elsewhere, what might be called an 'outpost of empire', a strategic port. Acquired by Britain at about the same time as Malta (in 1802), Aden became, not unlike Malta, a coaling station on the sea route to India, but it was only designated as a 'crown colony' more than a century after Malta had been; its socio-political texture and constitutional history were quite different and non-European. After intra-nationalist struggles in the mid-1960s Aden became part of Yemen, its capital city and its main port.

factor in its economy was removed. It was this problem which destroyed the hopeful plan of integration and which led Dom Mintoff to resign as Prime Minister.

His successor, Dr Borg Olivier, had now been driven to demand the same independence which Mr Mintoff was reviled for suggesting. In its view, Independence would not solve the economic problem; nor was it likely that an independent Malta could solve its unemployment difficulties without birth control, "which the dominant Roman Catholic Church forbids".

But one can sympathize with the Maltese, after the indignities heaped on them by the Colonial Office, for seeking the moral stimulus of becoming masters of their own island.

The Communist threat tended to be dismissed because, in the words of *The Economist*, it "would not be at all acceptable to the Maltese church." Borg Olivier was seen as dependent on Church support and therefore he could hardly be expected to play the Soviet card.

Some reporting and editorial comment persisted in the British press, with the provincial papers somewhat more prone to question London's miserliness than the national dailies. In an editorial entitled "Poor Malta" on 22nd August, *The Yorkshire Post* said it was doubtful if even the rosiest of long-term prospects would keep Dr Olivier in office, and the only conceivable alternative to him was "the troublesome Mr Dom Mintoff". Of course, it continued patronisingly,

the British Government's reluctance to keep handing out aid to Malta is not entirely inexcusable. The Maltese are in the habit of expecting to be looked after, and are slow to try to do something for themselves. Many of them want it both ways; they want independence and a rich aunt. But just this once more for old times' sake, could not the British Treasury muster £9m.?

One staunch Maltaphile, the Conservative MP Patrick Wall, publicly shamed the administration for treating Dr Borg Olivier badly. That decision should have been taken while Parliament was sitting, he said during a speech in Hull. "It was becoming clear that any friend of Britain could expect little help... Britain appears to go out of her way to help his (Borg Olivier's) political rival, Mr Mintoff, whose policy is to link up with the Afro-Asian Powers and to take Malta out of the Commonwealth." Wall also noted that whereas in Nyasaland Dr Hastings Banda had received several millions in aid, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia had been refused a £5 m. loan.⁴⁴

When he arrived in Malta Borg Olivier gave another press conference at the airport there on the following day, Tuesday 21st August. Met by supporters waving Nationalist flags who accompanied him boisterously in a long carcade to Valletta, he could announce that the British Government had agreed to treat Malta's request with urgency and that an independence conference would be called. It was now the turn of the Maltese press during the days that followed to highlight and dissect the prospects and implications of what had just come to pass. Reactions were mixed, with the pro-MLP press of the General Workers Union, especially the mass circulation *It-Torċa*, generally toeing the party line. Although fundamentally supportive of Borg Olivier's pro-independence direction, they had reservations about when and how independence would come, demanding consultations. The main MLP organ was *Il-Helsien*, which demanded Borg Olivier's resignation for not having requested independence before having sought aid, and then failed in his bid to obtain even that. The

⁴⁴ "No" to Malta criticised - Tory M.P.'s comment', 22 Aug. 1962. In a syndicated news item set as an accompanying sideline, headed 'Disappointment', the paper reported Borg Olivier's press conference on his arrival at Luqa, saying how disappointed he was that Britain had refused his request for a grant-in-aid of L8,750,000. Wall's speech was reported in other sections of the press; see e.g. 'Colonial hotspot: Britain let Malta down, says Tory', *Daily Mail*, 22 Aug. 1962. See the numerous press cuttings enclosed in 926/1309/48655 and 926/1179/48655.

English language press in Malta was largely dominated by the Strickland-owned Progress Press stable, which although anti-Mintoff saw independence as suicidal. The three small parties opposed the independence policy for one reason or another, and their weekly newspaper organs reflected these views. The well-established Catholic paper *Lehen is-Sewwa*, was worried lest independence would adversely affect the church, a corner-stone of Maltese social life. This was a familiar concern fully shared by Archbishop Gonzi and the Curia. Gonzi was aghast at the way Britain had treated Malta, forcing Borg Olivier's hand.⁴⁵ The *Partit Nazzjonalista*, Borg Olivier's party in government, was weakly organized in this sphere, having only a struggling publication, *Il-Poplu*; there was an independent pro-Western evening daily, *The Bulletin*, which frequently gave space to pro-Nationalist views. One such strident article in this paper, a copy of which made it to the Colonial Office desks, sought to uncover "the true purpose behind Sandys' offer" of £100,000:

... they thought of bringing Dr Borg Olivier down on his knees; making the mistake, however, of offering the contemptuous sum, that has steeled the people of Malta into a grim determination to shake off the yoke that has stifled their existence whilst at the same time paying lip service to the ideals of freedom and liberty. This trick has boomeranged... This is the game that was started in 1954. Eight long years during which the British Government, through its officials, had as its sole aim the forcing of Malta into a position where it could not do anything but accept the terms that would be imposed... Malta is still steady as a rock, with only the weak, the vacillating, the lackeys ready to do the British Government's bidding.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Wakefield/Kisch, 24 Aug. 1962, 926/1179/48655.

⁴⁶ "The True Purpose Behind Sandys' Offer", by "Hannibal", *The Bulletin*, 1 Sept. 1962, enc. 926/1179/48655.

SECRET

THE UNITED KINGDOM COMMISSIONER

7, St. Anne Street

Floriana

Malta G.C.

Tel. Central 21285

Friday, 24th August, 1962.

You receive

My Reference

10-36/62^I

sfs to ...
18-876

Dear John

On Wednesday evening I received a message from the Governor to the effect that the Archbishop would like to see me, and I called on him yesterday.

2. The Archbishop, after brief preliminary courtesies, became very excited. He told me that he had trusted the British and had been grossly betrayed. The British had broken a solemn pledge. He complained also that Mr. Maudling (in a letter which I have heard about but have not seen) had promised sympathetic consideration of Malta's needs. As it turned out, he said, ~~that~~ Malta had been given not sympathy but insults and contempt.

3. I asked the Archbishop to tell me what pledge had been broken and he brought up the old story of the 1958 statements. I explained H.M.G.'s attitude in this regard, told him of the massive capital aid which had been given and pointed out that the Malta Government had available more money than they could possibly spend over the remaining two years of the five-year capital programme.

4. I told him that Malta's future difficulties would derive from the Services run-down and the economic problems caused thereby. I told him of Borg Olivier's success in obtaining valuable concessions relating to the phasing of the run-down; and I said that H.M.G., so far from refusing help to Malta in meeting the economic difficulties caused by the run-down, had not yet had the opportunity even of discussing this question.

5. At the end of my explanations the Archbishop was somewhat mollified but urged that our side of the question should be explained to the public. I told him that I did not want to become involved in argument with Dr. Borg Olivier. In any case, I said, it was only courteous that explanations by me should await Dr. Borg Olivier's statement to the Assembly next week.

6. The Archbishop is chiefly distressed on account of the demand for early independence. This, he says, would be disastrous for Malta and is not wanted by the great majority of the Maltese people.

7. I sought to allay his apprehensions about independence and suggested that, provided Dr. Borg Olivier did not seek to embitter Anglo-Maltese relations, I saw no reason why the friendly link between Britain and Malta should not continue though its form would necessarily be different.

The Maltese and British governments having ended up at opposite poles in the question of financial aid in the face of a quickening British forces' rundown, matters came to a head and now assumed a sudden impetus in the constitutional sphere.

◀ In this significant account of a meeting requested by Archbishop Gonzi immediately following Borg Olivier's demand for independence and the international coverage given to his press conference, Sir Edward Wakefield explains how angry Gonzi was at the miserly treatment Britain was meting out to the Maltese. At one time a patriot and a loyalist, the Archbishop did not mince his words, accusing Britain to Wakefield's face of betrayal, insult and contempt; but he still felt that Independence would be disastrous for Malta and was not wanted by the great majority of the Maltese people.

Settling Scores

A NEW AGENDA

No sooner had Borg Olivier and his delegation left London in August 1962 than the Oversea Policy Committee and the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed their attention to the prospect that Malta could soon become independent.

The main question they had to address was this: how far, and in what ways, was Malta still important to Britain for defence purposes? If Malta was still sufficiently important, would it be advisable to think in terms of a defence treaty, as the Borg Olivier administration seemed to be suggesting, or would that be too binding on Britain? If Malta was no longer important as a base but only as an advance post, what facilities would still be needed there? Under what conditions could these be assured? If it was the Maltese who needed the British to stay on, because of the economic injection which their presence provided locally, any financial terms for this arrangement could be negotiated on that premise.

Some views were at variance. There were those who thought Malta's importance had decreased considerably, although not that it should be dispensed with. There was also a noteworthy view that Malta's importance for defence purposes could be increasing, if North Africa

became increasingly unstable. There were those who thought defence would have to be linked up to financial assistance, by way of rent, whereas others thought the two arrangements should be kept separate. There were those who thought Britain would determine when and how to make use of the facilities in Malta, others who reasoned that unilateral action would diminish Maltese sovereignty.

On the whole, the view in London was that it would be better to deal with Borg Olivier, but at the same time the likelihood that Mintooff would be returning to office could not be discounted. The reasoning about defence and finance tended to be intertwined in the minds of the decision-makers. If Malta were to become independent, would it not be better to keep any aid package for the time when independence itself would be negotiated, rather than frittering it away, as it were, in *ad hoc* subsidies?

It was the Oversea Policy Committee that co-ordinated strategy through consultations with the ministries most directly concerned, including the Foreign Office, the Defence Ministry and the Treasury. However, the power house remained the Colonial Office, with much of the thinking especially on constitutional and treaty arrangements being provided by its senior officers for the consideration of the Secretary of State who, often enough, endorsed the considered and already filtered advice put before him on set general policy lines.

It was clear that there would be no time for a draft defence agreement to be ready by 4th December, when Dr Borg Olivier and his team were due to meet Duncan Sandys and his aides. Moreover, there seemed to be little sense in basing financial discussions "on the past and on dreams, and everything to be said for basing our discussions on a fully-worked out development programme", probably for a further five-year period.¹ The meeting was due to last

¹ Fairclough/Kisch min., 24 Oct. 1962, 926/1309/48655.

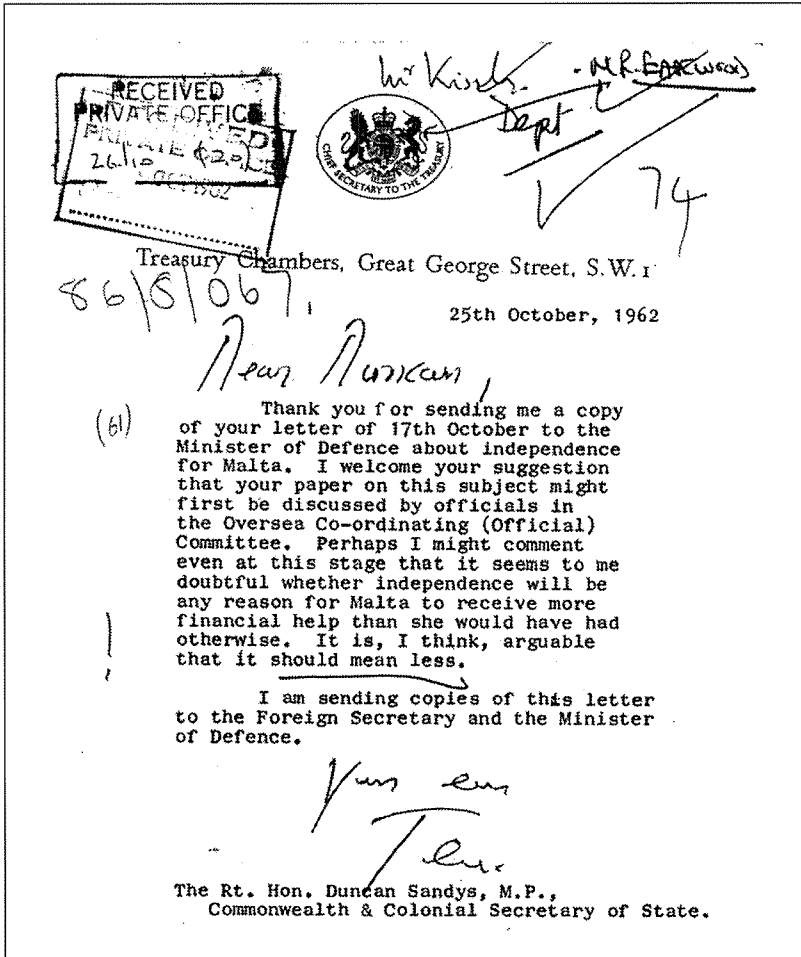
for only a few days, it being intended chiefly as a follow-up to Borg Olivier's 20th August request. Both governments wanted to straighten out so far as possible an agreed position for a later all-party conference with special reference to the new state's constitution, although defence and finance remained paramount. The latter two subjects continued to be seen, increasingly, as inextricably connected: in the inelegant phraseology of one official, "the Maltese will certainly want sterling quids for a Defence Agreement quo."² Any preliminary inter-governmental posture would have included agreeing to disagree, but as it turned out the Maltese and the British positions were generally not too far removed in principle. That did not yet refer to the haggling over money for land, considering that the Treasury went so far as to suggest that by virtue of its would-be independence from Britain, Malta should get less not more money. "Perhaps I might comment even at this stage", wrote the head at the Treasury to the Secretary of State shortly before the December talks with Borg Olivier, "that it seems to be doubtful whether independence will be any reason for Malta to receive more financial help than she would have had otherwise. It is, I think, arguable that it should mean less."³

The original plan was to have a small representative team for all-party preliminary talks before the end of the year, with a full-scale conference to follow.⁴ However, it appears that the UK Commissioner in Malta Sir Edward Wakefield prevailed upon the CO staff and had Sandys modify his original intention. If Britain wished to delay matters, Wakefield advised, calling an all-party conference would be the way to do it; but if not, it would be more practical to have a government team lead by the Maltese premier to thrash out a common basis of agreement first. If, as Wakefield believed it to be the intention of Her Majesty's Government, "we

² Eastwood/Poynton, min., 8 Nov. 1962, 926/1309/48655.

³ See the letter to Sandys from Treasury Chambers, 25 Oct. 1962, *ibid.*

⁴ Poynton/Wakefield, tel., 6 Nov. 1962, *ibid.*



A typical 'hands off' reaction from the Chief Secretary at the Treasury, who rather felt that if Malta became independent she should get less nor more money from Britain. Before Duncan Sandys became Colonial Secretary in mid-July 1962, while Borg Olivier was actually in London requesting a budgetary supplement and a heftier capital grant commitment, his predecessor Reginald Maudling had already intimated that he was having trouble with the Treasury.

want to strike a bargain with the Malta Government while a friendly political party is in power", he thought the ground would have to be carefully prepared before opposition parties were brought into the ring. The M.L.P., he noted, were most strongly opposed to what they regarded as the qualified form of Independence advocated by the Nationalist Party, adding that: "In any case, Mintoff would never willingly agree to Malta achieving Independence under Borg Olivier."

Ganado and Pellegrini opposed Independence until Malta was "more nearly economically viable" while Mabel Strickland, of course, opposed Independence "in any form and at any time". As matters then stood, Wakefield insisted, the Nationalist Party was the only one that wanted to have independence within the Commonwealth - a prospect which Britain naturally also found appealing. When Sandys had seen Borg Olivier on 21st September, two weeks earlier, it had been agreed that it would be "a very good thing" if the British and Maltese governments "could know each other's minds before the Conference began".

As it was "most important that the Conference should succeed", they had agreed that "some preparations would be required."⁵ Rather sanguinely, it was hoped that eventually the Maltese political parties might be able to hammer out a draft constitution among themselves, one which would then be presented, discussed and finalised in London in an all-party conference early the following year. Mr A. J. Fairclough noted that an agreed all-party draft constitution would be "unfortunate since, if there were provisions in it which we did not like, it would be more difficult to secure amendments than if all the Maltese parties produced their own drafts and the final version were thrashed out in conference." But Sir John Martin promptly rejoined that he would rather have "one draft Maltese constitution than five!"⁶

⁵ Wakefield/Eastwood, 6 Nov. 1962, 926/1309/48655.

⁶ See Martin's min., 27 Nov. 1962, on a memo of the same date by Fairclough to Kisch and Eastwood, 926/1339.

In fact, there were still reservations in various quarters as to what kind of independence Malta could be permitted, and in particular how exactly to balance out defence requirements with financial constraints. There were also other variables, such as any changes in the impending discharges and the span over which the “run-down” could last; the fate of the dockyard and of Bailey’s; the findings of the so-called “joint study”, and of the UN expert Dr Stolper.

At the Malta end, there was mounting concern at the discharges being announced, and Borg Olivier needed no prodding from the pro-Mintoff General Workers Union to realise that. A strike and a protest march in the Autumn of 1962 were grist to his mill, as a means of conveying to Britain just how serious the situation was, and how necessary it was that they listen to his requests for aid, and a postponement of discharges until alternative employment avenues would have been created.⁷ Britain had agreed that no naval discharges would take place before 1st January 1963, and that the run-down should extend into 1967, as Borg Olivier had duly informed parliament in September.⁸

When it was announced that the date for preliminary talks had been fixed for the first week of December, the Malta Labour Party reminded the prime minister that while they supported independence they had their own version of it, and that his administration and the British would have to take account of that.⁹

⁷ The silent march against discharges, called by the GWU, was held in Valletta on Monday 3rd December 1962, but it was emphasized that discharges were “not a party matter”. See the reports and comments in *Il-Helsien*, *l-Orizzont*, *The Times of Malta*, *Il-Berqa*, 4 Dec. 1962.

⁸ Wakefield memo, 3 Sept. 1962, 926/1179/48655.

⁹ See the parliamentary reports of the long sitting on 27th November when Borg Olivier announced his forthcoming meeting on 6th December in London; he expected that preparations for setting an Independence date would be undertaken, while the other parties, especially the MLP, insisted that their views be also heard. *The Times of Malta*, *Il-Helsien*, 28 Nov. 1962.



Valletta, 1962: A silent march protesting against discharges.

In the meantime, Borg Olivier's administration had been quietly drawing up a substantive manifesto of their position. In October, a senior Minister, Dr Giovanni Felice, had beefed up the arguments in favour of independence in a television address; and before Borg Olivier went up to London, accompanied by Felice, among others, he had transmitted to London a comprehensive statement of his government's thinking on what kind of independence Malta was seeking, and modalities as to how this should or could be brought into effect. A seven page consolidated statement of intent despatched from the Auberge d'Aragon on 24th November 1962 laid down the fundamental principles of the Maltese government's policy, plans and expectations for the immediate future.¹¹

¹⁰ Enc., Borg Olivier/Sandys, 24 Nov. 1962, 926/1339.



AUBERGE D'ARAGON,
MALTA.

24th November, 1962.

Dear Secretary of State, ^{avoy.} ^{26/11}

I thank you for your invitation, conveyed to me by Sir Edward Wakefield, to visit London early in December for an exchange of views on Independence preparatory to the calling of a conference in the first half of 1963.

Meanwhile I am enclosing a Memorandum which seeks to set out what I feel are some of the main points for consideration.

Yours sincerely
Borg Olivier

The Right Honourable
The Secretary of State for Commonwealth
Relations and for the Colonies,
London.

Borg Olivier's covering letter to the policy memorandum of November 1962.

Recapitulating recent events, Borg Olivier noted that the pro-independence parties had between them polled 75.84% of the votes in the general elections held earlier that year (in February), and referred to his London letter of 20th August demanding independence “as a matter of urgency”. “The principle of independence for Malta having been accepted”, Borg Olivier wrote, thereby rendering the endorsement of his request a *fait accompli*, it was now desirable to establish in a new constitution “sound and solid foundations on which the Maltese people can build a prosperous, happy and progressive independent State.”

Paragraph four of Borg Olivier’s *exposé* contained five tenets, to the effect that:

1. Malta should become a sovereign independent state in a monarchical and not a republican form, within the Commonwealth;
2. Malta should seek full membership of the Commonwealth, “of the Common Market subject to negotiation of suitable terms”, and of the United Nations and other international organisations;
3. Malta’s foreign policy “under my Government” would be aligned with the West and NATO “We would not be neutralist; the main opposition party might be if it came to power”;
4. Malta should see to reach “defence agreements” with the U.K.; and
5. A date should be fixed for “the restoration of sovereignty” as early as practicable in 1963.

This last statement, that Malta’s sovereignty be restored, is both interesting and provocative. It presumes, somewhat gratuitously, that Malta had been robbed of her sovereignty, presumably by the British in 1800, or earlier on. In other words, politically and patriotically

speaking, independence was not a concession but restitution, not a plea but entitlement; it was a coming even, akin to a settling of scores. If so, that is quite revealing of Borg Olivier's *forma mentis* with regard to domination in general and to colonialism in particular, Malta's rights and Malta's destiny, however legendary or mythological that may have been. It brings to mind a similar and still more striking position he would take in this 'colony to nation' context, in his first address to the consultative assembly of the Council of Europe three years later, when he would refer to Malta's membership as a home coming: "like returning home after a long absence". An intellectual Borg Oliver was not, nor was he a fanatic *italianista*, but from the Maltese nationalist font he had drunk since his birth. The "return home", like the "restored sovereignty", are idealistic notions in his psyche, almost an irredentist vindication. Pregnant with conceptual and historical implications, they are not just bargaining chips. Home to him was continental Europe, Malta's nearest spiritual and cultural *terra ferma*: Great Britain and her Empire were never 'home'. That gave expression to an old sentimental and cultural affinity with the continent. Nor had Malta deserved to be reduced to a colonial subject status, he seemed to be saying. The Maltese had valiantly fought and shed their blood to liberate themselves of the French yoke, but the British had usurped sovereignty in their stead and reduced them unjustly to centuries of subjection... Yet Borg Olivier says nothing of this explicitly. These are subtly implied messages in his characteristically epigrammatic turns of phrase - as in this unusually important negotiating document of 24th November 1962, unfurling the sails for an independent country, and hoping for a good wind.¹¹

In his memorandum to Sandys, the Maltese premier felt he must add, somewhat ominously, "that if satisfactory agreement cannot be reached, I shall of course have to reconsider my Government's present intentions." He sincerely hoped that would not be so, as he regarded the above outline of policy as "in the best interests of Malta at present."

¹¹ See below, III, 17.

Agreement between the UK and Malta would have to be reached on an Independence Constitution; a Service Lands agreement; a Defence Agreement; a Financial and Economic Agreement.

Five main points to be kept in mind when formulating Malta's Independence Constitution would be these:

1. There need be no second chamber;
2. Certain provisions safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms would be included;
3. There would be adequate provisions safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, public service including the police, and audit;
4. Maltese citizenship qualifications would be embodied in it; and
5. Certain important provisions should be entrenched.

As for lands held by the British Services, Borg Olivier proposed that on Independence these should be all transferred to the Government of Malta. With some exceptions and subject to certain conditions, the Government would be prepared to lease such lands as would still be required at a nominal rent.

On defence, the Government of Malta would negotiate an agreement under which in peace time facilities would be made available to British forces; this would not be an exclusive agreement and Malta would reserve the right to make other arrangements with other powers. On the assumption that "the Services may ultimately remain so integrated into the ordinary life of these Islands", issues to be considered would include the establishment of consultative machinery; the future of the Navy, Army and Airforce Institutes (NAAFI) and duty free imports; the future of the RMA and Territorial Regiments; facilities in time of war or emergency; association with NATO; and plans for the defence of Malta.

An overall financial agreement should be negotiated keeping in mind the needs for economic diversification and the provision of defence facilities, as well as the outcome of studies and consultations in progress about the run-down, the dockyard and the economy. Agreement "on a once-for-all separation endowment" was not indicated.

Other matters to be negotiated were citizenship and diplomatic representation. Borg Olivier's administration on its part would in the new year draft an Independence Constitution "and secure consultation thereon in Malta prior to the holding of the London Conference in the first half of 1963."

This policy statement was generally well received in London, where brainstorming about Malta had anyway been going on irrespective of it. "The memorandum is sensible, to the point and on the whole moderate", minuted Fairclough:

In very many particulars it follows broadly our own lines of thinking and leads one to the conclusion that it should not be in any way difficult to reach agreement or sensible understandings with Dr Borg Olivier during the December talks. Whether or not it will subsequently be possible to reach agreement at a formal All-Party Independence Conference is of course very much another question.¹²

There were reservations, however. First of all, it was "of course not true to say that the principle of independence for Malta has now been accepted." The Secretary of State might need to make plain to Dr Borg Olivier, it was believed, that this was the case, and would remain so, until a satisfactory All-Party agreement on the shape of independence arrangements had been arrived at.¹³ Although the

¹² Fairclough min., 27 Nov. 1962, CO926/1339.

¹³ *Ibid.*

*X in Sir John
Partin minute*

I agree that there is advantage in studying Borg Olivier's proposals, that is independence within the Commonwealth and a Defence agreement, sooner rather than later. In the past when he was pressed on who would have the final say in interpreting the Defence agreement, he accepted that we should have this. In other words while it might be an agreement between equals, one was more equal than the other. I do not believe he would mind this (Mintoff might) provided that he can attend a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference on exactly the same terms as any other.

Att'd

Although I am for the study being made now, I would hope that we need not get involved in discussion with Borg Olivier for quite a while. Rather should our approach to him be based on the economic problems that we face together and the need to get these out of the way and ensure that Malta can stand on her own feet before tackling Malta's future status, although we might make polite noises in regard to the latter. Another reason why I hope we will play it long is that I believe Malta in the years to come will become important again from a Defence angle. North Africa may go sour on us and then that Malta should be friendly is exceedingly important. To this extent I agree with Edward Wakefield's thinking in his memorandum attached at 'H' when he says the intimate association of Malta with Western Europe is even more important than its continued membership of the Commonwealth. Is the idea of some particular association or status within NATO a starter?

P

13th March, 1962.

SECRETARY OF STATE

MEMORANDUM

From PRIVATE SECRETARY

To *Sir J. Martin*

*12
14/2*

*The SecS agrees with
X of your minute.*

*SLP
15/3*

P.T.O.

This memo of 13th March 1962 is by Lord Perth, then the Minister of State for the Colonies. Representing a cautious, strategically-minded and basically anti-Independence line of reasoning, it floats the idea that for Western security purposes Malta could be somehow integrated with NATO.

prospect of independence for the onetime indispensable fortress - the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" - of Malta was beginning to sink in, not everybody in Britain was in as great a hurry to dispense with Malta, as Sir Edward Wakefield seemed to think. Maybe he was, because he had nightmares of Mintoof coming to power. There was a quite different view among some of the top brass at the CO, more so in the Defence Ministry, that a go-slow approach would be preferable. The gradual resolution of economic problems was one consideration. Security, however, was as always the overriding concern.

In the considered opinion of Lord Perth, the Minister of State at the Colonial Office:

Another reason why I hope we will play it long is that I believe Malta in the years to come will become important again from a Defence angle. North Africa may go sour on us and then that Malta should be friendly is exceedingly important.

Perth agreed with Wakefield that the intimate association of Malta with Western Europe was even more important than its continued membership of the Commonwealth.¹⁴ It was this line of reasoning that would soon lead to prompting Malta's possible membership of or association with NATO. This possibility was mainly originated, discussed and explored by the British rather than by the Maltese side, although Borg Olivier went along with it in principle.¹⁵

Other reservations about the Malta memorandum concerned lands used by the Services, what the Maltese would have seen as a recovery or hand-over to themselves the British regarded as a take-over and expropriation by the Maltese of their own acquired title. It was

¹⁴ Min., 13 Mar. 1962, CO926/1309/48655.

¹⁵ See below, II, 15 and 16.

suggested that Malta might have to pay to get back lands which the Services would no longer need. The Malta Government's proposition that defence facilities be only available to Britain in peacetime was quickly shot down. "I don't think Dr B.O. realises that in war the soldiers take over", noted Sir John Martin. It was expected that such facilities as were retained would be equally available both in peace and in war.

As for agreements with other powers, British policy-makers had been thinking of including in the Defence Agreement an undertaking by Malta "not to enter into defence agreements with other powers without H.M.G.'s agreement." By declining a once-for-all endowment, Borg Olivier was seen to want "a pension payable indefinitely."¹⁶

Borg Olivier's memorandum formed the basis of the December preliminary talks. Some sensitive topics were however being played close to the chest by the British for the time being, and they were reluctant to let the Maltese into their confidence. These related mainly to defence and financial combinations: they included the suggestion that Malta become a member or an associate member of NATO.

Although the Malta Government said in their policy statement that they were pro-Western and against neutralism, they did not specifically allude to NATO membership, whether full or associate. The British saw the NATO integration prospect as a double assurance that Malta would not go astray, and as a fallback position for themselves. Here again, however, they were uneasy at the prospect of Mintoff coming to power and upsetting arrangements.

For constitutional purposes, the British side were using as their drawing board the Blood Constitution of 1961, as amended by Order-in-Council in 1962 at Borg Olivier's behest. Some changes

¹⁶ Fairclough, min., 27 Nov. 1962, 926/1339.

would be necessary, obviously, but for the most part these were technicalities or self-evident matters: a Governor General not a Governor, a High Commissioner *qua* Ambassador, Cabinet responsibility. They were keen to ensure human rights, which the Blood Constitution had endorsed for the first time as a set of principles, and they realised there could be some haggling over these. One of the points of concern related to the continued validity of existing laws, or otherwise, once the new Independence Constitution would come to pass. Another concerned checks-and-balances to ensure impartiality in bodies such as the Public Service Commission and the judiciary, Borg Olivier's position on the latter being that judges should serve *quam diu se bene gesserint*, i.e. subject to good behaviour, with removal only upon a decision of the legislature. In such matters he would have been consulting with his Attorney-General, Professor J. J. Cremona, who became much involved in constitution drafting.

Borg Olivier's general stance made the prospect of an independence agreement for Malta more amenable: he would retain the Queen as the Head of Malta in a monarchical set-up, and he would want Malta to become a member of the Commonwealth. And he could be depended on as an ally within the Western democratic fold. It was argued emphatically, even by Sir Alec Douglas-Home, that it was more important that Malta remain within the Western European fold than that it join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Here was an easy understanding between two broadly conservative parties, not prone to experimentation in foreign policy during the Cold War.

There had been some discussion already as to whether Malta, being so small, could be admitted to be a full member of the Commonwealth, but it quickly dawned on the officials concerned that various other small states, not all of them with Malta's record, had already been admitted to that Commonwealth in recent years, from Sierra Leone to Cyprus. Their Prime Ministers could attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences, as Dr Borg Olivier too would then be able to do, on an equal footing.

(4)

Mr. Kisch.

If Dr. Borg Olivier forms a government he will no doubt seek very early discussions with H.M.G. with the object of securing the objective he has always desired, namely independence for Malta within the Commonwealth. It might be well for us to submit to Ministers fairly soon our ideas on the line we should take to such a request.

2. If independence within the Commonwealth were granted it would presumably have to be coupled with a Defence Treaty.

3. In the past objection has been seen to independence plus a Defence Treaty for two reasons, first the small size of the country: we did not wish to depreciate the currency of Commonwealth Membership; and secondly could we really rely on a Defence Treaty to give us all that we required?

4. To take the second point first, what we require is, in the future, going to be considerably less than it has been in the past. We shall not need Malta as a base, only to provide "advance facilities". This reduces the risk attached to a Defence Treaty. It is true that our experience of Defence Treaties elsewhere, e.g. Nigeria, has not been all that happy but in the case of Malta surely the Maltese are bound really to want us to stay and not to turn us out because we provide so much employment and contribute in other ways so substantially to their economy. No doubt they will wish to lay down conditions, e.g. to demand a very large rent or subsidy in some other form, but it seems to me that there is no escape from the U.K. Government assisting Malta to a sizeable extent in one way or another for a good many years to come.

5. As regards depreciating the currency of Commonwealth Membership, this is surely in a fair way to depreciation already. The number of Commonwealth Members has increased (Sierra Leone, Cyprus, Tanganyika) and is going to increase still further (Jamaica, Trinidad, ? British Guiana, Kenya, Uganda, ? Zanzibar). Malta (330,000) is comparable in numbers with Zanzibar (304,000) and almost with British Guiana (558,000); Trinidad is 825,000. It is comparable with any of these three and indeed Cyprus and Sierra Leone in "civilisation". I should have thought that the argument against Membership for Malta is now much less strong than it was five or six years ago.

6. Will you please have this considered further in the Office (I doubt if we should seek the views of other Departments until we have some guidance from Ministers?).

I attach a second copy of this minute so that the defence and Membership aspects can be considered separately.



22nd February, 1962.

No sooner had the PN won the February 1962 general election than at least one senior Colonial Office official was already expecting Dr Borg Olivier to ask for Independence within the Commonwealth, and figuring out possible responses to such a request. This minute from Mr Christopher Eastwood to Mr John Kisch, Head of the Mediterranean Department at the C.O., is predicated on the assumptions that in the case of Malta a Defence Treaty might work out, and that although small Malta would probably not be barred from Commonwealth membership.

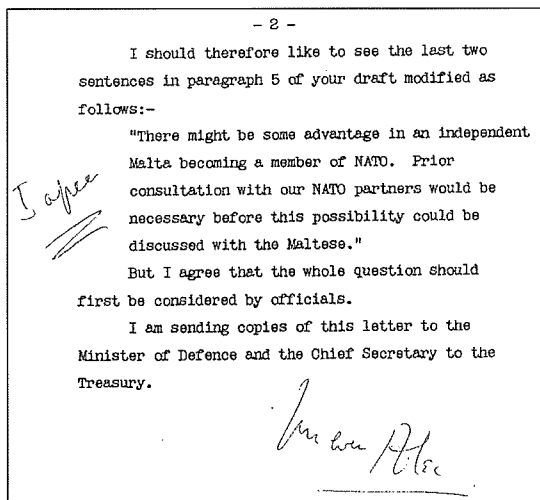
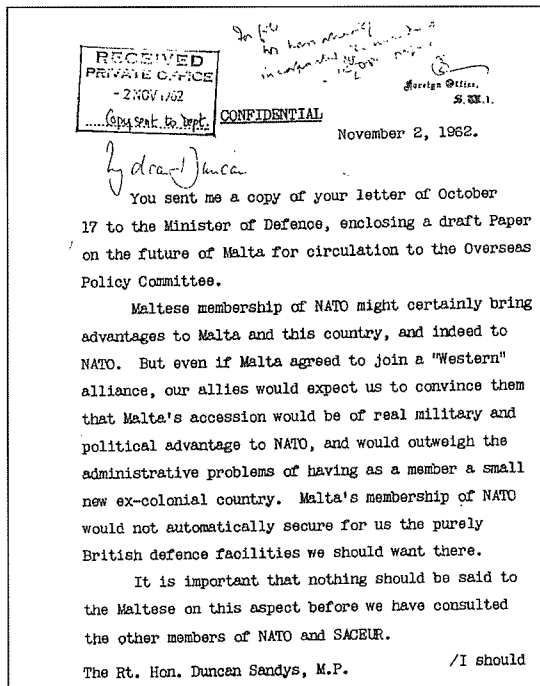
There was a recurring concern that consensus should be sought among the various Maltese political formations, so far as possible, so that the proposals as set out by the Malta Government at the December preliminary talks need not be regarded as final. Indeed, as already noted, there was disapproval of Borg Olivier's publicly stated assumption that independence was being granted. The British Government had agreed to discuss it, not to grant it. Borg Olivier's position had also seemed to be that no referendum on independence would be necessary since the two major parties were in favour of it, but as things turned out that predisposition would grudgingly change.¹⁷

On the whole, however, the proposals from Valletta constituted a sufficiently malleable working document to go by, and that was the general understanding reached in these talks. The discussions neither dotted the "i" nor crossed the "t", nor were they meant to do that. Both sides wanted some leeway, and more time, to get on with the project in due course.

Before leaving London on 13th December Borg Olivier gave a televised interview at the Savoy which was relayed on MTV that same evening. It was hoped, he said, that Malta would become independent "early next year", and that she should be a member of the Commonwealth according to his party's programme. He also referred to talks he had in Rome about the possibility that Malta join the Common Market.¹⁸ On his arrival in Malta, Borg Olivier told the press that agreement had been reached with the Secretary of State on all issues that could be foreseen to arise during the forthcoming Independence Conference. All political parties would be invited to participate in it, he added. He would seek, before then, as soon as possible, to consult with all the parties on the various questions that were likely to arise. Such talks, he said, would not be simply to fix the

¹⁷ See below, II, 9.

¹⁸ *Il-Helsien*, 14 Dec. 1962, p. 1.



Only weeks after Malta had requested Independence, Sir Alec Douglas-Home as Foreign Minister agreed with Mr Sandys (and Lord Perth), that the possibility of Malta's membership in NATO should indeed be considered and discussed, but that for the time being nothing should be said to the Maltese on this. The note in the margin "I agree" is by Sandys.

time and place of the conference, but with a view that “together” we might present a constitutional draft, and start preparing for the conference in other ways.¹⁹ Borg Olivier may also have been trying to parry criticism of the fact that only the government party had been represented at these preliminary talks in December, to the exclusion of the other parties, including the Malta Labour Party.

His new agenda of not just asking for independence, but actually preparing and negotiating for it, still needed attending to in many respects. He would want to report back to Cabinet and his party about the latest round of talks and possibly take some soundings. He was unlikely to want to face Mintoff and the other party leaders before he was surer of his ground. In the meantime various questions about the prospect, the nature and the likely consequences of Malta's independence, were being raised in the Maltese as well as in the British parliaments, and no less in all sections of the Maltese press.

If 1962 was the year of decision, 1963 was a year of deliberation. An eventful and anxious year, it saw the problems and the prospects facing Malta in the throes of (a still much debated) independent status.

While efforts to diversify the economy and to plan ahead infrastructurally and institutionally were being devised and set into motion during the year 1963, the Services run-down hung like a noose around its neck. Equally, the prospect of independence, seen by the leading political parties as the best if not the only way out of the impasse, was feared, even dreaded, by others, as a predicament that would make matters still worse, possibly a lot worse, with the likes of Mintoff lurking in the shadow of power.

There was a general fear of the unknown - if not, to use Eric Fromm's phrase, the fear of freedom. But there was too a growing

¹⁹ See the coverage of his press conference in all sections of the Maltese press on 15 Dec. 1962.

determination to face up to the future, whatever the breaks of the game might bring.

In addition to the harrying and the scuttling characteristic of this year, there were two pivotal intertwined political events. However much one might have kept back initially from pronouncing Malta's would-be fate unequivocally, both of these may with the advantage of hindsight be seen unmistakably as steps in sequence on the road to the same destination.

The first of these was a visit to Malta by the Colonial Secretary, Mr Duncan Sandys. Some weeks later, a first round of multi-party constitutional talks began in London.

Increasingly, the bent of the argument was not whether Malta could or would become independent, but under what terms and conditions - and especially under what *genre* of constitution - would it become so, and how soon. The fact that such a prospect was held forth was not to say that misgivings and reservations did not exist in British quarters about letting Malta go.

But times had changed. End of Empire had been in the air since the late 1940s and more so since the late 1950s, after the failed Anglo-French assault on Egypt (partly *via* Malta) following Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. By 1963 not only had Nehru's India and Bandaranaike's Ceylon obtained independence. So had the tribally and religiously torn Sudan, on 1st January 1956 - a green light for the Gold Coast (re-named Ghana), and for Nigeria, to follow in the same footsteps. A year later, in August 1957, racially divided Malaya, which had survived a state of emergency as the result of a Communist threat, became independent under its premier Tunjku Abdul Rahman. In the 1960s the escape quite suddenly became "a stampede", as Porter calls it.²⁰ By the Autumn

²⁰ Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism* (Longman, London & New York, 2nd ed., 1984), p. 335.

of 1962, another nine colonies had obtained independence. Apart from the Cyprus of Archbishop Makarios to which Borg Olivier liked to refer (August 1960), these were, also in 1960, British Somaliland (in June) and Nigeria (in October). In 1961 there was Sierra Leone (in April), followed by the Cameroons (which joined Nigeria and Cameroun); and, on 28th December, Tanganyika (which with Zanzibar would soon become Tanzania) under the long-lasting presidency of Sir Julius Nyerere. Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, got independence in August 1962, just as Malta was asking for it; while Uganda joined the growing list in October of that year. During 1963, in the exit line-up with Malta, were Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak, Kenya and Zanzibar, which became independent in that year. In the queue there were, among others, Nyasaland, later Malawi; and Northern Rhodesia, later Zambia.

These, like Malta, became independent in 1964. Whereas Malta continued to be called Malta - however you chose to pronounce it - they generally changed and 'indigenized' their names, confusing a generation of laymen and history students in the West. Another onetime outpost of empire, Aden, became independent in November 1967, as the People's Republic of South Yemen.²¹ Egypt was supposed to have become independent as early as 1936, by a pertinent coincidence during the Abyssinian War; but until Nasser's nationalization and the Suez crisis of 1956, it had been deprived of control over what since the 1870s had become its nerve-centre: the Suez Canal Zone.

On succeeding Reginald Maudling in mid-1962, Duncan Sandys was fully aware of this "tide in the affairs of men". It was indeed a flood. Whether that would lead to fortune or not, there was the rub. However, the British prime minister Harold Macmillan acknowledged this state of affairs plainly and squarely when, in a speech to the Houses of Parliament of the Union of South Africa on 3rd February 1960, he declared that the wind of change was blowing through Africa,

²¹ On Aden see above, I, 4.

SECRET.MALTA.ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS.

~~Malta's plight is very serious.~~ ^{in Malta} Unemployment is already almost 6,000 (6%). The Services run-down will mean over the next 5 years a reduction of some 4,500 in direct local employment and 1500 in indirect employments, and a drop in Service expenditure from about £20 m. to £10 m. ~~Malta's budget totals about £13 m.~~

2. We are in for a row with Baileys over the dockyard and it will have to come under new management. If it is ever to work properly, the labour force must be brought down to an economic level. This will probably involve another 2,000 men losing their jobs, and more if the Admiralty work is withdrawn as is at present threatened.

3. The birthrate continues high and emigration is still fairly low, between 2 and 3,000 a year. These two factors combined produce a steady increase in the population; the labour force increases by at least 1,000 a year.

4. The 1959/64 Development Plan which was to have produced 7,500 new jobs has so far produced less than 1,000. This figure ~~will no doubt~~ ^{should} increase before March 1964 but it will not come near the target. ~~despite the pumping in by H.M.C. of £12 m. so far with a further £2.74 m. to follow if required.~~ It is indeed pretty plain that Malta ~~is never likely to be able to develop tourist and industrial facilities which will support her present population at the present standards.~~ Her tourist potential is limited, she has no natural resources ^{except} ~~and~~ the harbour ~~which is strategically placed on shipping routes.~~ ^{and} ~~Emigration must be encouraged but it will be very hard to get numbers greatly increased.~~

5. Unless emigration can be stepped up ~~more than seems likely~~ and unless development can produce far more jobs than expected, ~~the combined effect of all the blows to Malta's economy could be a rise in unemployment over the next five years to 15,000 (which equals 15%). At the same time the general standard of living would be bound to drop drastically - despite the large financial assistance which H.M.C. will almost certainly have to give to the next Development Plan.~~

6. The independence issue hardly affects these hard economic facts although Dr. Borg Olivier in particular and Maltese generally live with the delusion that the United States and/or various European countries will clamour for the privilege of pumping in assistance once they are independent.

As the politely crossed out parts of this brief dated 14th November 1962 make clear, there was not much faith in Malta's ability to pull through as a viable economic unit, or anyway, in Whitehall; such forebodings were not uncommon in Malta as well. The 15% unemployment forecast here is modest compared to other predictions later on.

and whether we like it or not this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.²²

If Kwame Nkrumah's Gold Coast could get independence, why not Borg Olivier's Malta?

People in Britain had ceased to care much about the once glorious empire on which the sun never set; they became more interested in their jobs and houses, their motor cars, supermarkets, television, and holidays in Spain. The sixties saw so many momentous changes, including the landing of man on the moon, that imperialism was eclipsed by the welfare state and consumerism, just as Britain had been by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. as a world power. The 1957 Defence White Paper which scheduled the abolition of national service by 1960 and emphasised nuclear deterrence, when Sandys was at the defence ministry, led to greater British reliance on the U.S.A. because an independent nuclear deterrent proved too costly. Britain's brakes on defence were made public, in fact, only some weeks before the Treaty of Rome was signed. Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in February 1960 was followed, in July 1961, by Britain's (unsuccessful) application to join the Common Market. The early sixties were also a time of turbulence, when mutual annihilation on a global scale for a while seemed chillingly likely. In August 1961 the Berlin Wall was built, and in the Autumn of the following year the Cuban missile crisis brought the world face to face with the chance of a globally devastating nuclear war between the two post-war super-powers, led respectively by presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev. Britain felt constrained to purchase, with some difficulty, Skybolt missiles and Polaris submarines from the U.S.A., although a first Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was at least signed in August 1963. That was a few months before President Kennedy's assassination, which shocked the whole world. The Maltese Prime

²² See e.g. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (Vintage Books, New York, 1961).

Minister had only recently met him, and as Kennedy was a Catholic and the leader against Communism in Cuba and everywhere else, his untimely, dramatic death naturally had great resonance in Malta, where television was fast becoming a household commodity.

Empire was no longer a priority against this background. Americans and Commonwealth members winced at Britain's surge towards Europe, which however de Gaulle vetoed (in January 1963). No wonder that in such circumstances the remark by the former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson - that Britain had "lost an Empire and not yet found a role" - hit a very raw nerve indeed. In the same speech, in December 1962, Acheson invited Britain to retire from the nuclear arms race, as the Americans were much better equipped to deal with the Russians.²³

"One of the most remarkable stories in the world's history was coming to an end", wrote Bernard Levin:

And yet the lion must needs adjust its dress before leaving... But the flag that had once flown over so many lands was coming down now, as dusk fell; and - ultimate indignity - there was none to give it the ritual sundown salute. As late as the Fifties it was possible to hear regrets, or even complaints, about the Attlee Government for, as it was put, 'giving India away'; by the Sixties such voices were all stilled, and the shrinking dominions could no longer boast a Clive or a Rhodes, a Milner or a Lugard, an Elgin or a Curzon.²⁴

"I did not", Winston Churchill had said, "become His Majesty's Prime Minister in order to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire." Macmillan did, and

²³ See T. O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State; English History 1906-1976* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 1979), p. 383.

²⁴ B. Levin, "Run it down the flagpole", *The Pendulum Years; Britain in the Sixties* (Lond., 1970), p.124.

to this day there are those among his erstwhile followers who cannot forgive him for putting down the White Man's Burden with a haste that suggested he had found a poisonous snake sticking out of it.²⁵

The anguish was trenchant. A visit to Malta, noted James Morris with a flair rivalling that of D.H. Lawrence in his earlier visual description of a band playing down Valletta's main street,²⁶ was "less an experience than an indoctrination". And among the grandest historical spectacles of the day was the return of the Mediterranean fleet, after exercises at sea, to its incomparable haven:

Crowds hastened to the quays to watch the fleet come in, flags ran up poles and yardarms, children hopped about in excitement, wives chatted happily beneath their most fetching parasols. The distant thump of a band, the muffled thudding of engines - and there they were! First the destroyers, smoke streaming, swept past the harbour mouth to their Sliema moorings. Then the big ships approached in line ahead, their decks lined with ratings, their lamps flashing, their Marine bands overlapping in rich discord as, one by one, they entered Grand Harbour to the strains of 'Rule Britannia'...

All the ships were moored facing out to sea, for it was a maxim of Malta that the Mediterranean Fleet was ready for instant action at all times, against all comers. The majesty of it all, and especially the arcane and gorgeous ritualism of the Navy, "certainly helped to overawe potential enemies of the Crown" for it gave an impression of strength more than merely military or economic, but actually organic:

²⁵ "The walrus...", *ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁶ See H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony; The Maltese Experience* (Malta, 1979, 2nd ed., 1991), p.124. He was sitting in a Valletta *café* in 1920.

Malta felt both powerful and permanent, for the British were of the opinion that the base was absolutely essential to the security of the Empire, and therefore destined to be British forever and ever.²⁷

²⁷ James Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets; An Imperial Retreat* (Lond., 1978), pp. 152-154.

Testing the Terrain

DUNCAN SANDYS VISITS

Ibis et redibis non morieris in bello. Thus did the oracular Latin adage pronounce itself in response to an anxious mother who asked if her son would or would not return from battle. It all depended on the comma. A pause before the ‘non’ would get her son safely back, whereas one after it, would not.

And thus Duncan Sandys in his farewell statement on the afternoon of Thursday 6th June 1963, after a week’s visit to Malta. “We are in no hurry to lay down the responsibilities of Government so long as you still need us”, said the first sentence. “But once you are ready and willing to manage your own affairs we have no wish to hold you back”, said the second. Now where was the comma?

Having been accused of “desertion” in his meeting with Mabel Strickland’s PCP, warned of “a Cuba in the Mediterranean” by Herbert Ganado’s DNP, and told by Toni Pellegrini of the CWP that they would “take over” rather than permit a Mintoﬀ dictatorship, the former Defence Minister had to sound circumspect. Yet he well knew at what pace the onetime British Empire was being disbanded and, more pertinently, that Britain’s defence needs were being

radically and irrevocably readjusted. He also knew that both the leading Maltese political parties wanted independence steadfastly and immediately.

Dominic Mintoff's MLP and Joe Attard Kingswell's GWU had told him they even objected to the negotiation of any defence agreement before Malta would have first become a sovereign state. In meetings and exchanges with him during this visit, they wondered whether it would be desirable to have any defence agreement with Britain at all. While striving to be reassuring, the Secretary of State for the Colonies could not be stingy, not on this issue. So here we had it, a finely tuned send-off, combining English understatement with a balance that would have bemused Tacitus. Investing in goodwill, Sandys did not wish to seem too far inclined one way or the other; yet *intelligenti pauca*. What he was really trying to do, without an overt commitment, was administering the medicine with spoonfuls of sugar. It was almost as if Britain no longer had much to do with the final decision really: it was up to you, Maltese. "At moments of great decision it is natural that there should be doubts and heart searchings", Sandys concluded. "But of one thing you may be sure, whatever you may decide Britain will always remain Malta's friend."¹

In trying to figure out how the English mind ticked, Nirad Chaudhuri was once reminded of the third calendar in *The Arabian Nights*. That is the story of a prince who spent a delightful year in the company of forty princesses and then (when they had gone to pay a visit to their father) came to grief by opening a door which they had implored him in tears not to open. "I have wondered", writes Chaudhuri, "why the girls, when they were so afraid of the risk, did not take the obvious precaution of carrying away the key with them":

¹ 'Malta Independence Conference to be held in July - Statement by Mr Duncan Sandys', 6 June 1963, Colonial Office Information Department, 926/2080/48543.

But, of course, the story-teller made them give it to the prince, because for once an Oriental wished to demonstrate that, besides Fate, man's perverse will and fallible nature also could bring about his ruin and degradation. So the prince duly succumbed to the temptation, and opening the door came upon a beautiful horse in the hall beyond. As he was a lover of fine horses he took it out to ride. But the animal was a winged horse, and as soon as the prince mounted its back it spread out two mighty wings and flew away....²

Mr Sandys held the key close to his chest, but he did not envy that prince. In truth, the door was already ajar, even as the George Cross rested in its frame. "I intend to convene a conference under my chairmanship to consider the request for independence and to discuss the draft constitution and any amendments which may be proposed", he announced in his sixth of June statement. "I have agreed with the Prime Minister that all parties in the Malta Parliament should be invited to send representatives to this conference which will be held in London during the second half of July."

In 1963 the run-down started taking its toll and by mid-year 8% of the population was already unemployed, while frantic attempts were being made to increase the emigration rate. The trade unions did not pull their punches, although they were in no position to dictate matters. Recalling "a chain of broken promises", the GWU was passionately convinced that "we cannot put our trust any longer in Britain's representatives and that we must work for our economic survival independently from Britain. That is why we cannot accept and will strongly oppose any defence agreement before we are free to shape our future political and economic life", Attard Kingswell wrote to Sandys:

² Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Part IV, "State of the Nation", *A Passage to England* (Lond., 1959, repr. 1966), p. 185.

It is now the duty of your Government to accelerate the rate of economic expansion and to create sufficient alternative employment opportunities to cushion the effect of the required structural and rapid change in the economy... we will repudiate any defence treaty that is signed before our people could freely express their views on the matter... Malta cannot go out into the world and earn its living by industrial enterprise, if she is going to remain a British Base of a different type... no threats of hunger and starvation by your local apologists will now stop us from demanding to first become free and independent and decide later on the terms of a properly negotiated defence treaty, if necessary.³

Sandys was the same person who in 1957, as Secretary of State for Defence, had inaugurated a controversial programme of cutting costs and streamlining the Forces: it was he who had conveyed the decision to close down Malta's Royal Dockyard as an Admiralty concern. Ironically, Sandys in 1935 had married Winston Churchill's daughter, Diana;⁴ how his father-in-law, who was still alive, must have balked at this hasty dismantling of that onetime Empire for which he had so bravely fought, even in what was probably its most strategic and successful outpost during the Second World War, and of her Royal Dockyard where, in November 1943, he had so resolutely given the 'V' sign in the midst of cheering Maltese dockyard workers.⁵

Moreover, that Sandys announcement in 1957 had come all too soon after a declaration made in the course of the Integration Round Table Conference in 1956: to the effect that there would be no

³ Attard Kingswell/Sandys, 3 June 1963, 926/2080/48543.

⁴ They were later divorced; Sandys married a French divorcee.

⁵ See Churchill's foreword to *The Epic of Malta*, first published in Britain at that time; a facsimile edition of this illustrated war-time book (c. 1943) was published in Valletta in 1990. See also e.g. P. Vella, *Blitzed but not Beaten*, Malta, 1985, illus., pp. 196-197.

reductions of defence services' expenditure in Malta in the foreseeable future. Attard Kingswell pointed to Sandys personally: "Your decision of 1957, followed by the abrogation of the Constitution in April 1958, proved the hollowness of British promises", he charged. "This also ended any hopes about Britain's willingness to restore our ability to earn a living in an increasingly competitive world after 160 years of British tutelage and trusteeship."⁶

Through researched memoranda, the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions went to great lengths to demonstrate just how badly hit Malta would be by the run-down, and recommended various measures which could facilitate the necessary economic diversification and transition. It strongly suggested that the run-down be extended from five to ten years, up to 1972 instead of 1967. This suggestion was considered to be "more than justified because of the crude fact that for 150 years the Maltese economy has been ruthlessly subjected to Defence requirements - and no Government could possibly be expected to alter the structure of its economy in just five years":

The Colonial Administration's miserable failure in its attempt to do so, is a tangible proof of this statement. It is strongly contended, therefore, that a period of ten years is the least possible time required for a radical diversification of the Island's economy.⁷

The CMTU was largely behind the newly formed National Front Against Discharges; this was in fact chaired by the CMTU president, A.M. Callus, while the Confederation's general secretary, W. R. Zahra, was an active member of it as well. They insisted on the publication of the report made by the Joint Study Group, and that

⁶ Attard Kingswell/Sandys, 3 June 1963, 926/2080/48543.

⁷ See the enclosures in W. R. Zahra *et*, submitted to Sandys, 6 June 1963, 926/2080/48543.



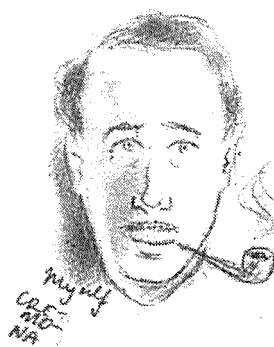
Duncan Sandys

Opposite: An impression of Mr Duncan Sandys as sketched in pencil by Professor J. J. Cremona in London, some weeks after the Colonial Secretary's visit to Malta. Other 'portraits', executed by the same miniaturist on the same occasion, depict the Minister of State for Colonial and Commonwealth affairs, Lord Lansdowne; Dr Borg Olivier; and himself.

(By courtesy of Prof. J. J. Cremona.)

Maltese trade unions should be represented in any constitutional conference which was due to take place in the near future.

Between them, the GWU and the CMTU represented practically all organized labour and the existing unions, the former being older, larger and more industrially based than the latter, which however comprised numerous unions and associations representing some 40,000 members. These included the Malta Civil Service Association (whose secretary was Callus, a health inspector in his late thirties), the Malta Union of Teachers (founded in 1919, this was the oldest of all the existing individual unions), and the General Retailers and Traders Union. The GWU, which spoke for 65% of organized labour in Malta, was more secular, blue collar, better organized and Labour-



oriented. Its secretary-general, Attard Kingswell, a former dockyard ship fitter (like Callus, in his late thirties) was respected in British circles. Perceived to be a "close ally" of Mintoff, to whom he was related by marriage, Attard Kingswell was "more cautious" and he generally "put the interests of the workers before purely political considerations."⁸

The meetings Sandys had with leading representatives of each of the Opposition parties were held *in camera* and pledged to secrecy. The exchanges were frank and crispy. To the extent that he was linked to the position of the Borg Olivier administration, with whom naturally the talks were mainly being conducted, Sandys fell in between two stools. By one side he was accused of rushing, by the other of stalling.

The confidential meetings with the smaller self-styled "centre parties" were held on 5th June; each lasted about half-an-hour. The first meeting was with the Democratic Nationalist Party, which was represented by Dr Herbert Ganado, Dr Albert Ganado and Dr Riccardo Farrugia, three lawyers. Asked by Duncan Sandys to explain why Independence without economic viability would be "dangerous", Herbert Ganado replied that independence was dangerous for two reasons. In the first place, Mintoff had declared that he would "arm the people". He had actually declared this in the Assembly. Secondly, Herbert Ganado continued, Mintoff would "play off the West against the East". He would "turn Malta into a Mediterranean Cuba". He would "establish a dictatorship of the Left." To this strong and evidently alarming language, the former Defence Minister promptly retorted that "the West would not tolerate a Cuba in the Mediterranean." When asked by Albert Ganado what Her Majesty's Government would do if at the forthcoming conference the Opposition parties united in opposing

⁸ "Maltese Personalities", a secret note for the Secretary of State, drawn up by the office of the UK Commissioner in Floriana, in connection with Sandys' visit to Malta, CO926/2080/48543.

the fundamentals of the Constitution, that is if they resisted the concept of Independence, Sandys replied: "That will be for me to decide when the time comes." On financial aid, he said that the British would "give as much as they could afford whether Malta were independent or not." But he added that if Malta were independent, "it might perhaps get aid from the U.S.A. and other foreign countries who do not give aid to Colonies."

The main political purpose of the Ganado party at this meeting was clearly to press for a referendum, specifically on whether the Maltese wanted "immediate Independence" or not. Sandys argued that since both the major parties were asking for Independence they would ensure that the result of a referendum would be in favour of Independence. Asked to explain why he might expect a different result, Herbert Ganado said he expected "an overriding vote against immediate independence because, at the last election, the Nationalists only voted against Mintoff. They did not want, and did not vote for, Independence." In the course of this meeting, however, Ganado also observed that Independence would only be acceptable to the people of Malta "if Malta's economy were adequately supported by the British." Otherwise, he declared, the Maltese would reject it. Sandys concluded by saying that economic progress and political stability, though connected, were really separate things. It might be ten years before Malta was viable but he did not see "why independence should interrupt economic progress."⁹

Sandys then saw a three member delegation from the Christian Workers Party led by the party leader, Toni Pellegrini, who formerly had been the secretary general of Mintoff's Malta Labour Party. Pellegrini was the only one to speak up. Absolute independence, he told Sandys, would mean "death to the Nation". "If Britain goes", he declared, "my party will take over. We will

⁹ Minutes entitled "Democratic Nationalist Party", enc. Wakefield/Eastwood, 18 June 1963, 926/2080/48543.

forestall Mintoff who aims at dictatorship." Asked by Sandys why he would not support the constitutional government, meaning the Borg Olivier-led majority party heading the administration, Pellegrini replied: "Because it is not strong enough to resist Mintoff." Like Ganado before him, he clearly favoured a referendum on the issue of independence. If there were a referendum on independence, according to Pellegrini 75% would be against and only 25% for. He held, again like Ganado before him, that at the last elections (in February 1962) the Nationalists did not really vote for Independence. "Independence", Pellegrini added, "was only one of the eighty-four items in the Nationalist Party's programme." Moreover, he continued, the Nationalists had included Independence in their electoral programme ever since 1931, but had never, when in office, done anything about it. (Here he must have forgotten that as early as 1932 the Nationalist leaders Ugo Mifsud and Nerik Mizzi had gone up to London and asked for Dominion Status.) Stability, vital for Malta's economic progress, depended on the British presence, Pellegrini held. He suggested "co-citizenship" as a solution to the constitutional problem. He also raised other issues concerning the Broadcasting Authority and its unfair disregard of the opposition parties; and the transfer of Maltese ratings to the Royal Navy who, he said, should be given the same treatment as British sailors.¹⁰

Sandys then met in confidence the PCP delegation composed of Miss Mabel Strickland, Wilfred Mamo and Captain Formosa. A referendum on independence was also on the agenda of this traditionally loyalist party, mixed with deeply hurt feelings about the unfolding British posture on independence.

For the third time in succession during the same morning, Sandys heard it said that "independence was not an issue at the 1962

¹⁰ Minutes entitled "Christian Workers", enc., *ibid.*

elections." In those elections, according to Mr Mamo, "there was the straight issue of socialists versus anti-socialists":

The Church, through the Junta, supported the anti-socialists and instructed people to vote for the Nationalist Party, which in the Church's opinion had the best chance of defeating Mintoff.

If Sandys wanted the truth, Mamo insisted, he could get it by means of a referendum. He said that at an election people would vote for a party but in a referendum, they would vote on the issue put to them. Captain Formosa said that the Maltese were hurt by "British desertion" - thus using a military term for an offence which in other circumstances might have led to execution by firing squad. Taking the cue from this not unfamiliar setting, Miss Strickland said that the Maltese would like to support the British but she could not rally this support "unless the British showed that they were really interested in staying in Malta." Reiterating that the issue at the 1962 election was "between Mintoff and the Church", she suggested two questions in the proposed referendum:

1. Do you want Independence?
2. If so, do you want Independence immediately, i.e. at 1st January 1964?¹¹

Mr Sandys seems hardly to have put in a word with Mabel there. He listened and registered in his head what he was being told with a rather monotonous regularity by these three parties which, though small, were not wanting in vigour or articulation. Like the roll of a drum they all invoked: referendum, referendum, referendum.

In pouching his minutes of the proceedings, Sir Edward Wakefield could not help butting in with his own view as to whether a

¹¹ Minutes entitled "Progressive Constitutional Party", *enc., ibid.*

referendum should or should not be held. In a 'Nota Bene' attached to the minutes of the DNP meeting, during which Herbert Ganado had flown the kite of a possibly acceptable independence arrangement depending on how much financial assistance actually would be forthcoming from Britain, Wakefield noted that he had discussed the question of a referendum briefly with Sandys. Minuting his own views, he said that he thought that the important question that Malta's voters would ask was "What help will the British Government give?" He was of opinion that:

If the British Government were willing to guarantee substantial financial support for an independent Malta, the Maltese would probably vote for independence, ... if no such guarantee were forthcoming, they would vote against it. I pointed out that, if a referendum produced a decision against independence, the British would be accused of rigging the result. In particular, the Church would be accused of undue influence. In these circumstances the question of United Nations, or other supervision, would certainly arise.¹²

The two meetings which may have somewhat perturbed or at least perplexed Sandys and his aides, were those they had with the GWU and the MLP delegations, led by Attard Kingswell and by Mintoff respectively. In both, fairly well known positions were essentially restated face to face, perhaps a little more tellingly. Attard Kingswell's first statement was: "We want Independence as soon as possible." His second, that if a Defence Treaty was necessary, it should be negotiated "*after* Independence". And his third, that the British Government "had to put the economy right" because they were responsible for the consequences of the Services rundown. In the course of the meeting George Agius, the GWU Assistant General Secretary, said the Union was afraid that if defence requirements remained paramount, "Malta would never develop a viable

¹² Wakefield min., 14 June 1963, enc., *ibid.*

economy." Attard Kingswell seems to have got rather carried away by this intervention, adding: "We want the troops taken away as quickly as possible." He later took this back, saying that he did not mean his demand for troops to be removed at once to be taken seriously. But Sandys was quick to point to the tenuousness of this position, telling the GWU that they were in effect saying: "You, the British, should create maximum unemployment and then solve the ensuing problem." According to the minutes of the meeting as recorded by Wakefield, Attard Kingswell insisted that the Union could not tolerate "men being discharged without having alternative jobs to go to." It was agreed that they should help Malta adjust its economy to the new conditions being created by the Services rundown.

The political rhetoric, very much echoing that being used by Mr Mintoff and other MLP officials - who prided themselves now on being more nationalist than the Nationalists - seems to have had the better of Attard Kingswell on this occasion. The sooner the troops left more dire would the consequences of the rundown be. But with the troops around, there might be no economic take-off. That winged horse again. Had the rundown's further extension not been desired? On the other hand, it was felt there had been a breach of trust; patience with British policy twists and turns had run short. If Malta had to sink or swim, it would be as well for her to take the plunge and go free style. In particular, there was the suspicion that with a sleight of hand the British might divest themselves of all responsibility while still somehow retaining Malta as a base, thereby restricting its political and economic manoeuvrability in international affairs.

The meeting with the MLP reinforced such attitudes and fears. Present for it, together with Sandys, Wakefield and Christopher Eastwood from the Colonial Office, were Mintoff, his deputy Dr Anton Buttigieg, Attard Kingswell again, and Danny Cremona. Opposing any defence treaty before independent status had first been attained, Mintoff said: "We want to be neutral. Wars have harmed our economy and us. I do not want to be involved in a war. We can get a guarantee of security from the United Nations

Organisation.” He wanted “Independence without any conditions. We can then negotiate any military or economic agreement that suits us.” He also said that “if there was a Polaris base in Malta this would make the Island a priority target for an enemy.”¹³ Any such link with the U.S.A. would *ipso facto* floor any chance for Maltese “neutrality” in the then context of an ideological and military divide, from which the Mediterranean Sea or region was in no way exempt.¹⁴

Reluctant to be drawn yet again into an incipient discussion of the merits of the 1962 election by the losing parties, Sandys changed the subject to explain that the Ministry of Defence regarded Malta as “a convenience - but nothing more than that. The Services want to withdraw from Malta. I am trying to persuade them to keep forces here, and even to send more men.” Mintoff said that he did not want the Services rundown prolonged. What he wanted was economic development that would absorb labour, made redundant by the rundown. Supporting him, Attard Kingswell explained: “We only complain of the rundown because alternative employment has not been provided.” Mintoff then made a statement which again complemented what Attard Kingswell had said about the troops leaving as soon as possible. “I say unequivocally”, Mintoff declared, “that we do not want a British base in Malta.” Responding to a comment by Sandys, he denied that the removal of the British base from Malta would disrupt the island’s economy. The MLP wanted the forthcoming conference to concern itself only with

¹³ In fact there was at this time some loose talk of the possibility of an American Polaris submarine base in Malta, which the pro-Western Borg Olivier seemed to regard favourably, partly no doubt with an eye on American money. On Polaris and the prospects for an American base in Malta, see below esp. II, 11.

¹⁴ On this see e.g. B. Ranft and G. Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy* (Macmillan, Lond., 2nd ed., 1989), ch. 1; A Mazzeo, ch. 1, “Il Mediterraneo, un mare di guerra”, in A. Mazzeo, *Sicilia Armata* (Armando Siciliano ed., Messina, 1991); D. Holloway, “Soviet policy and the arms race”, and G. Kennan, “The state of US-Soviet relations: breaking the spell”, in G. Prins (ed), *The Nuclear Crisis Reader* (Vintage, New York, 1984); but see below on Maltese-American relations and Malta-NATO relations, Part II, 11, 15; and III, 16.

Independence. When Sandys enquired whether this meant that he did not wish to discuss a Defence Treaty or Financial Agreement, Mintoff replied that, in regard to financial aid, Malta would hold the British Government to its past declarations. Past promises must be fulfilled. He would ask: "Are you going to make financial aid dependent on defence?" To this Sandys replied by saying that he had "an open mind."

Mintoff then started criticizing Borg Olivier, who would not call an early general election, nor accept to get UN observers to supervise it; he also complained of what he regarded as restrictive parliamentary procedures, of the absence of religious freedom, and of Rediffusion's bias in favour of the Catholic Church in Malta. Danny Cremona inveighed against what he called "the tyranny of the Church", giving as an example his wife not being allowed to be a godmother "simply because her husband had been interdicted." Mintoff asked for the constitutional talks to be held urgently, as his party was being continually put off by Borg Olivier; they had still not seen a Draft Constitution.¹⁵

To greet his arrival in Malta, Sandys had found a scathing four page letter from Mintoff dated 31st May, which he signed as leader of the MLP but wrote from his home in Tarxien, doubtlessly typing it himself. That might be described as a long preamble to the meeting which they later had. In this letter, Mintoff spelt out the MLP's grave reservations as to having what he repeatedly called "alien forces" in Malta after independence. Interspersed with some gratuitous allegations and coloured by a turn of phrase typical of the man, all in good English, its main import was this: listen here, in spite of church sanctions we speak for 33% of the electorate, you have failed us before and woe be it to you if you do not heed us now. "We reserve the right," Mintoff concluded, "to repudiate the terms of any treaty or agreement negotiated behind the backs of the people of Malta at this inappropriate stage."

¹⁵ Minutes entitled 'Secret', enc., *ibid*.

- 4 -

in the treaty but also with the 100% certainty that the economic advantages accruing from the treaty will be such as to make it forever unnecessary to resort to these hazardous and humiliating practices.

Above all we believe no honourable terms whatsoever can be negotiated on defence before our people have become free and independent - before our freely elected spokesmen can meet the representatives of the United Kingdom Government on a basis of strict equality.

That is why we reserve the right to repudiate the terms of any treaty or agreement negotiated behind the backs of the people of Malta at this inappropriate stage.

Yours sincerely

DM
DOM MINTOFF

Leader,
Malta Labour Party.

Excerpts from Mintoff's letter to Sandys of 31st May 1963.

He felt left out, and was annoyed. "The National Executive of the Malta Labour Party have learnt of your impending visit to Malta through the Press", Mintoff's letter to Sandys began. "The papers speak also of official discussions you intend to hold with the Prime Minister, Dr Giorgio Borg Olivier... the future of Britain's forward base in Malta and that of NATO will, we presume, feature prominently in these talks." Briefly, Mintoff held that in principle a British military presence in Malta after independence would be a risk rather than a reassurance for Malta but that if, because of imposed economic constraints, some such agreement would be necessary after independence would have been obtained, its benefits

would have to be doubly assured and the assumption of full sovereignty on its expiry guaranteed.¹⁶

A number of jabs were directed at Sandys himself:

...as Minister of Defence in 1957, you unhesitatingly brought the axe down on the naval dockyard in Malta because it no longer suited your new defence policy. No philanthropic, moral or political considerations could then move you to reconsider your decision.

We are, however, not unmindful of the very precarious economic conditions in which our country finds itself after 163 years of British tutelage and trusteeship. The British Governor, Sir Maurice Dorman, made no bones about the huge number of Maltese citizens that must seek voluntary exile if by 1967 the number of our unemployed is not to exceed 25% of our total working population. Neither are we comforted by the failure of our priests-backed Government to improve upon the record of your own Colonial Administration...

What, in practice, was to be the outcome of such a harangue? To Mintoff's mind, it was an either-or situation:

Either on independence day we shall be in a strong enough position to coerce your Government into fulfilling the obligation to repair the economic damage wilfully done to our people and to proffer, without any strings attached, the aid necessary...

Or if unfortunately our people do have to part temporarily with a portion of their newly-gained sovereignty, this must not only be done with all the conceivable safeguards

¹⁶ Mintoff/Sandys, 31 May 1963, 926/2080/48543.

ensuring the restoration of full sovereignty on the expiration of the term contemplated in the treaty but also with the 100% certainty that the economic advantages accruing from the treaty will be such as to make it for ever unnecessary to resort to these hazardous and humiliating practices...

How would an independent Malta, assuming Independence was being given, be in a position to "coerce" Great Britain to cough up? And that "without any strings attached", after all the damage caused to the Maltese "wilfully"? In what textbook of economics or politics was there a "100% certainty" of economic success "for ever"? There can be little doubt that such touting would not have impressed Sandys other than negatively, all the more so in the light of Mintoff's reluctance to settle for any package before Independence, demanding instead everything for nothing, as it were. This was, at best, a very tough negotiating position from the Opposition benches at this delicate stage. However sincere or idealistic they may have been in pushing it, Mintoff and his party were simply playing into Borg Olivier's hands by convincing Sandys and the British Government that Mintoff was unreasonable and impossible.

However much Sandys may have said he had an open mind, the calculated reasoning in London was very much cast in the mould of negotiation and bargaining - to the point of at first expecting being paid market prices by the Maltese for lands which the British had taken from them in the first place. To the British, defence was still the single most important consideration. The threat of instant coercion rather than some reassurance about security, not even one of a prearranged transitional nature, could not have endeared the prospect of dealing with a Mintoff to British hearts or minds - quite the opposite. At the same time, however, Mintoff was conceding the military base, if that were necessary for economic reasons, subject to certain conditions and a time limit.

Sandys had gone some way to assure Mintoff that "Malta would not be a base in the sense that Cyprus is a base from which operations would be conducted":

Malta would not be operational. Malta is very convenient to us but no more and it is not indispensable. I spend my time trying to persuade the military to keep more troops here.

This was arguably the most important part of the conversation Sandys had with Mintoff, yet Wakefield failed to minute it. This information derives from a minute by Eastwood, the other English official present at that meeting. Eastwood felt he should brief John Kisch on the matter, filing a type-written script detailing his version of how the conversation had actually gone, as follows:

Mintoff: Malta will not be in a position to make a defence treaty until it becomes independent. After independence then if it is necessary we can make this Island into another base.

Sandys: "If it is necessary"? You would like British forces to go away?

Mintoff: No. We want to remain neutral. All these wars have left us weak. Another war would mean the end of us.

Sandys: I cannot believe that the rest of the world will destroy itself in a nuclear war and that Malta alone would survive. It is unrealistic to think one can isolate oneself in a nuclear war.

Mintoff: Malta would certainly be in the thick of it if there were a Polaris Base here. That I do not agree...¹⁷

Apart from the question of independence as such, Sandys also used his visit to familiarize himself at close quarters with the economic situation as this was developing, and with what the prospects for development and diversification were. He came armed with a whole series of briefs about every pending matter at hand, from British European Airways to Bailey to Hilton, just in case one or other of these

¹⁷ Min., Eastwood/Kisch, 28 June 1963, 926/2080/48543.

items would come up in conversation during his stay. These briefs included land sales or transfers, comprising an Admiralty site required for the new power station project. There was a lengthy brief about emigration, which was being seen as indispensable. British European Airways, to Borg Olivier's chagrin, had intended raising their fares without the required permission from the Malta Licensing Authority. There was a confidential preview of the report and recommendations for long-term economic survival by the Stolper-led UN team of economists; and one about another possible American defence interest, other than the Polaris: that for a "tropospheric scatter station".¹⁸ Another brief was about the Royal Opera House, for the reconstruction of which Borg Olivier was trying hard to get funds. It was a dismissive and somewhat uninformed brief, parroting the Treasury: "a white elephant involving heavy subsidies and recurrent costs. The suggestion that tourists would go to Malta to hear third-rate opera is manifestly absurd."¹⁹

The financial situation, industrial and tourist development were very much on the agenda, with considerable interest in how new industries and hotels would be faring, together with other plans - such as a yacht marina. With this project in mind, the Malta Government had already sought technical advice and assistance from the UN and Italy. The rundown and the ongoing Bailey litigation concerning the dockyard also figured, of course. Notwithstanding the foreboding attitude taken by Sandys, there was a discernible conservative shift representing a more cautious line in British thinking on the proposed defence agreement as well as on Malta's would-be relations with NATO, of which it seems Borg

¹⁸ On the possibility of a tropospheric 'Scatter Station' in Malta for the U.S. Air Force, see below, II, 11.

¹⁹ 'Malta Opera House - Brief for the Sec. of State', enc. 926/2980/48543. Opera buffs in Malta would have argued passionately against such an arrogantly dismissive attitude, because various opera singers who later rose to fame had performed first at the Royal Opera House. So long as it existed, this was well patronised by the Maltese public.

Olivier had not yet been informed. Then there was the so-called Joint Study, which was ready but secret, with the British side unwilling to publish the fairly ominous findings of a report which they themselves had proposed to Borg Olivier and his delegation in December 1962. Stolper had seen it, and Borg Olivier, for good reason, wanted it out.²⁰

Before leaving Malta, Sandys gave a wide-ranging account of what had been achieved or was in the pipeline by way of economic diversification, a veritable progress report. Perhaps wishing to counter-balance the generally daunting mood, he struck an optimistic note. He sought to substantiate this by reference to specific initiatives being undertaken by the Malta Government and the private sector, as well as the British authorities.

The Council of Administration at the dockyard had put in, as managing agents, one of Britain's leading firms of ship repairers - Swan Hunters - and business at the yard was "steadily increasing." In the last four weeks 25 ships had come in for repair and 15 more were due to arrive shortly. The British Admiralty was sending H.M.S. Troubridge for an extensive refit, which would provide work for 400 men for eighteen months. Splendid efforts were being made to launch new industries: "excellent factories" were being provided by the Government at specially reduced rates with exemptions from taxation, in some of which "the most up-to-date and expensive manufacturing machinery" had been installed. Many of these light industry goods were destined for export. Tourism looked promising. As however 8% of the working population was unemployed while (due to the post-war 'baby boom', in an already densely populated land) the number of workers for whom jobs were needed was growing, emigration was being encouraged. The British Government was providing money to help pay the fares. "My own grandfather emigrated to New Zealand and my mother was born there and I am very proud of this," Sandys empathised:

²⁰ These briefs for the Secretary of State's visit, prepared in May 1963, are enclosed in the volume 926/2080.

Other relations of mine emigrated to Australia. With the help of the Australian Government several thousand (more) Maltese are moving to Australia... For those who do not want to go so far from home there are good prospects nearer at hand... tens of thousands of vacant jobs in the south of England for which British workers are not available. These include jobs in the building and construction trades and in the engineering and manufacturing industries. There are also good openings for women in the clothing and tailoring trade in hospitals and hotels.

An experienced official, Mr Hector Bond, would be based at Malta House in London to help find jobs for Maltese in Britain, process applications and get entry permits.

Independence would not prevent Malta from continuing to receive financial aid from Britain. Britain was giving assistance to overseas countries, mainly in the Commonwealth, to the tune of £300 million a year, and had undertaken to provide nearly £30 million in grants and loans towards Malta's current five-year plan.²¹

But what would become of Anglo-Maltese relations once Malta gained independence? Here Sandys was clearly thinking of such misgivings as the MLP and the GWU leaders had expressed. He sought to assuage these, while appealing to what he knew to be the "pro-Western" feelings of the majority, taking in the PN together with the small parties, who together represented 66% of the votes polled in the 1962 general election. From Britain's point of view, the main items on an agenda for the future were still defence and finance; the constitutional provisions were ultimately an internal matter for the Maltese to sort out since it was they who in that case would be independent anyway. "I have had it suggested", Sandys

²¹ On adjustments, breakdowns and shifts in British aid figures, promised or effected, see esp. I, 4; II, 13; and III, 16.

ventured, "that the question whether Britain should be allowed to retain military forces in Malta after independence should depend upon the amount of money we are prepared to pay for this right". In response to that he said again that Britain would do her best to help Malta economically "whether we have forces here or not."

I believe it is just as much in your interest as it is in ours that British forces should continue to come to Malta. Apart from the security they afford they give direct and indirect employment to many thousands of Maltese and in one way or another they spend many millions of pounds here each year.

The British navy was being reduced owing to the increased flexibility of long-range transport aircraft, so it was "no longer an absolute necessity for us to maintain a military base in the central Mediterranean." Nevertheless, Malta was "not without importance or attraction" to Britain's armed forces:

We have established valuable facilities here and provided they are welcome our three Services would certainly like to stay. They have always been very happy here. They like Malta and its people and I believe you like them... Together we have faced danger and death and together we have shared in the honours of victory. The people of Britain on their side have deep affection and respect for the people of Malta. If Malta now decides that she wishes to resume her separate and independent identity this does not I am sure mean that she intends to sever her close links with Britain...²²

²² "Malta Independence Conference to be held in July - Statement by Mr Duncan Sandys", *op. cit.*, f. 4.

Marlborough House

A CONSTITUTION IN THE FORGE

During the December talks in 1962, Sandys had already asked Borg Olivier to prepare a draft for an Independence constitution, to serve as a basis for discussion. Borg Olivier referred this task to his Attorney-General's office, then led by Professor John Cremona. Cremona formed part of his delegation in London during the December talks, as he had done four months earlier, when the Prime Minister had made his urgent request for independence. Cremona worked hard on this draft, consulting various other constitutional models, and he had it ready by the following April.¹ The draft text was then submitted to the PN Parliamentary Group and to a legal commission nominated by the PN Executive to examine it. This commission, which was made up of three backbench lawyer MPs on the Government side, assessed the draft and made

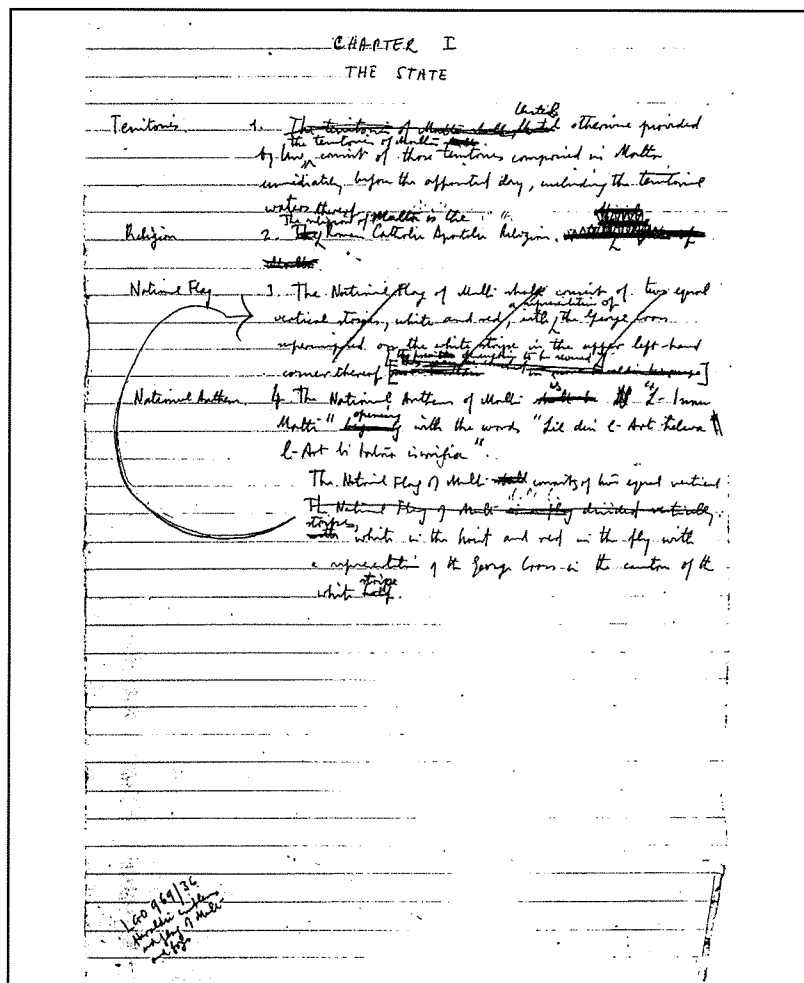
¹ J. J. Cremona, "Recollections of Constitution-making", *The Times*, Valletta, 21 Sept. 1989. A copy of the original covering note from Cremona to Borg Olivier outlining the constitution's philosophy and contents is being reproduced for the first time here (p. 155) by courtesy of its author.

some recommendations. Its members were J.F. Cassar Galea and Benny Camilleri with G.M. Camilleri as chairman. Among other things, the Camilleri commission recommended that a Constitutional Court be set up as the Cremona draft had not made provision for this. The party executive and Cabinet accepted these recommendations which were incorporated into the draft.² This draft, having been further discussed in Cabinet, was shown to Sandys when he visited Malta during the Whitsun parliamentary recess in the first week of June 1963. A week later, on 12th June, Borg Olivier broke the news to parliament in an important speech outlining the fundamental characteristics of the proposed basic law for Malta as a new state.

Malta would be a parliamentary democracy "benefiting from the experience of other constitutions in the free world". A constitutional monarchy and a member of the Commonwealth, she would retain universal suffrage on the basis of proportional representation. Within the short space of three weeks, the prime minister's statement was debated in parliament (on the 14th June), copies of the draft were made available to the party leaders, and they were invited to discuss it at the Auberge d'Aragon, with the prime minister in the chair, without much success. The MLP said they needed more time to study the draft and prepare their amendments to it, while smaller parties left soon after they had entered the Auberge d'Aragon for a continuation meeting because the Prime Minister refused to issue a 'communiqué' to say that those attending the conference did not necessarily agree with immediate Independence. They were angry at an allegation made on Rediffusion by Dr Mario Felice who accused them of not wanting independence "to keep the people in darkness".³ Sandys had just informed Borg Olivier that the planned Malta Independence Conference would open at

² G.M. Camilleri, "Kif giet l-Indipendenza", *Malta Nazzjon - 10 Snin* (PN, Progress Press, Valletta, 1974).

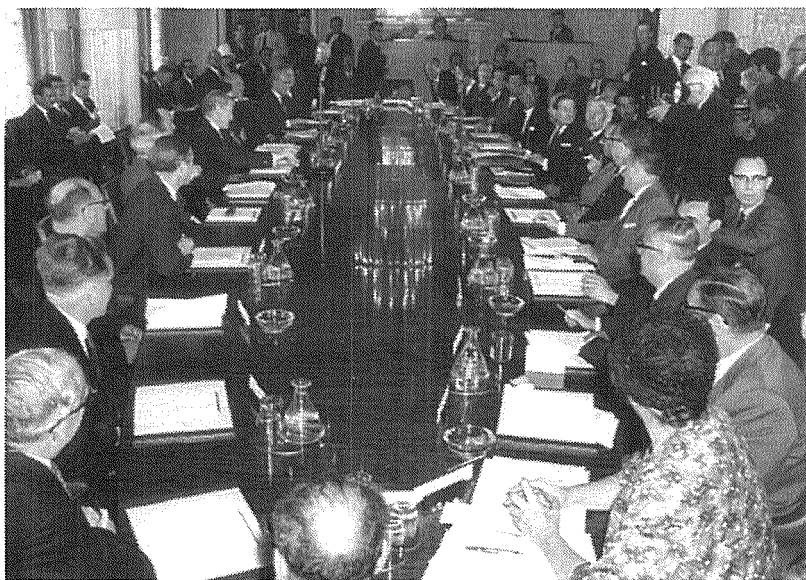
³ "Canado, Pellegrini u Miss Strickland jitolqu 'l barra", *Il-Helsien*, 8 July 1963, p.1.



The first articles of the Malta Government's draft Constitution for Independence, revised in the hand of the then Attorney General, relating to territory, religion, national flag and national anthem (manuscript by courtesy of Prof. J.J. Cremona). The second article, establishing Roman Catholicism as the official religion of Malta, was buttressed further after long and delicate negotiation. The source reference in the bottom left-hand corner "LGO" is to a file from the Lieutenant Governor's Office.

Marlborough House in London in a fortnight's time. The other political parties were therefore invited to submit amendments to the draft circulated to them, preferably a week in advance of the conference which was scheduled to start on 16th July.

This short notice did not deter them, they all submitted amendments. They were familiar with the administration's thinking and with its electoral manifesto. They had already met Sandys and knew more or less what their respective stands would be. In fact, before the parties even went up to London, relations between Dr



The opening of the Malta Independence Conference at Marlborough House, London, in July 1963. The British delegation is led by Mr Sandys (left, centre). Governor Dorman (right, centre) is in between Dr Borg Olivier and Mr Mintoff. To Borg Olivier's right are Dr Felice, Dr G. M. Camilleri, Dr J. Cassar Galea, Dr B. Camilleri and Prof. J. J. Cremona, among others. To Mintoff's right are Dr A. Buttigieg, Mr E. Attard Bezzina, Mr D. Cremona, Dr H. Ganado, Mr A. Pellegrini and Miss M. Strickland, the only woman around the table.

Borg Olivier and the Opposition parties were said to have deteriorated. Dr Borg Olivier was convinced that he could not persuade the party leaders not to speak at the opening of the conference; he even doubted if he could persuade them to speak briefly.

The afternoon of the opening day of the conference was already intended as a business session, with the flurry and flourish of opening speeches behind it. In the evening a reception was held for the delegates at Marlborough House itself. Some socializing in such circumstances does not hurt, even if it may be simply perfunctory. The morning of the following day, 17th July, was again a working session, but in the afternoon there was a Royal Garden Party, which many VIPs from both sides of the British Houses of Parliament, as well as former governors and lieutenant-governors of Malta, attended in addition to the delegates.⁴ That no doubt was a grand

⁴ At the reception held in honour of Dr Borg Olivier and the Malta delegation, hosted by Sandys, in addition to Dorman, Olivier and the 25 conference delegates and advisers, there were also Lansdowne, Nigel Fisher, Sir Hilton Poynton, Martin, Eastwood, Kisch, Fairclough, N.B.J. Huijsman, J.D.Higham, Trafford Smith, the legal advisers J.C.McPetrie, A.R.Rushford, G. De Winton; Sir A. Grattan-Bellow, P.R.Noakes, R.W.Francis, A.N. Galsworthy, and two members of the Joint Study team, D.J.Kirkness and P.Selwyn. From the Office of the Commissioner-General for Malta in London: Mr J. Axisa and Mr H.P.Bond; Wakefield; Knighton, Crawley, and D.J.L.Moore from Secretariat; from the Commonwealth Relations Office: the Duke of Devonshire, Sir Saville Garner and G. St. J. Chadwick; from the Ministry of Defence: The Rt. Hon. Peter Thorneycroft, Earl Mountbatten and F.W.Mottershead; from the Admiralty: The Rt. Hon. Lord Carrington, Sir Clifford Jarret and P.S.Newell; from the War Office: J.B. Godber, MP; from the Air Ministry: Rt. Hon. Hugh Fraser; from the Treasury: Rt Hon John Boyd-Carpenter, Sir Ronald Harris and C.J.Hayes; from the Ministry of Labour: Miss B.M.Grainger, another member of the Joint Study team. From the Shadow Cabinet there were four guests: A. Bottomley, J. Callaghan, D. Healey and J. Strachey, together with other MPs including, from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation, Sir Ronald Robinson, Lt. Col. J.K.Cordeaux, J.Rankin, M. Woodnutt and Lord Braye; as well as 'Maltaphiles' Sir W. Teeling, Major P. Wall and Wing Cmdr. R.G.Grant-Ferris. Lords Boyd and Perth attended as former C.O. Ministers. There were in addition five members from the Council of Administration of Bailey (Malta) Ltd., including its chairman Sir Eric Millbourn; and four former colonial governors of



Telephone: C. 2361

Our Ref.

Your Ref.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S OFFICE.

Malta, April 16, 1963.

Sir,

Having been entrusted by you with the task of drafting a new Independence Constitution for Malta, I am now submitting the enclosed draft. In perusing it you will no doubt keep in view the usual transitory provisions which are now normally contained in the Order in Council to which the Constitution itself is attached as a Schedule and indeed also the usual short Independence Act.

In drafting this Constitution it has been sought to frame a modern and progressive charter benefiting by the many other constitutions that have gone before it. Indeed it will be noted at once that the suggestive map of Haslemoen kept constantly in mind. Although individual features are not lacking, the aim has been in the main to keep the front of this Constitution firmly planted on tested ground. It is conceived as a cool-headed attempt to produce something that will work and, it is hoped, work well.

The draft truly provides for Government of the people, by the people and for the people, with the principle of parliamentary responsible government based on the democratic English pattern. The independence of the judiciary and of certain other officers and authorities requiring freedom from political control for the proper performance of their special functions has been secured. Provision has been made for citizenship of Malta, a Bill of Rights, an Election Commission and a Public Service Commission, parliamentary control of finance and powers to safeguard the nation. Universal adult suffrage has of course been maintained and the disqualifications for election to Parliament have, in accordance with modern principles, been reduced to a minimum.

It will be noted that the draft provides for a 'living' Constitution which, notwithstanding that it is written, has the potentiality to adapt itself to changing conditions and the national growth. All the provisions of the Constitution are sensible, but certain basic ones have been entrenched. There are indeed the terrors of entrenchment and in this respect an element of direct control by the people has been imported in the requirement of the approval of certain specific constitutional amendments by a referendum.

It has been endeavoured to avoid prolixity and, consistently with the nature of the instrument, complexity.

In a Constitution of this sort it is usually regarded as unwise to include certain details which may well be regulated by ordinary processes.

The Hon. the Prime Minister,
Auberge d'Aragon,
Valletta.

2.

In so far as essential policy is concerned, as already set out in your various discussions with the Secretary of State and instructions to me, the draft reflects of course the policy of the Government of Malta.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

G. M. Camilleri
Attorney-General.

The Attorney General had a draft constitution ready by April 1963. This lengthy covering note to it explains its main provisions. This text was then examined and commented upon by a PN commission comprising three lawyer MPs - G.M. Camilleri, J.G. Cassar Galea and Benny Camilleri, set up for the purpose, before its endorsement by Cabinet.

Malta: Grantham, Creasey, Douglas and Laycock. Sir Harry Luke, a former lieutenant governor, and Sir Hilary Blood were also invited, as were the trade unionists Sir G. Woodcock and A. Hayday from Transport House (who had been a member of the Blood Commission). The Clerk at the House of Commons and other officials together with Mr Lindsay-Fynn of the 'Friends of Malta' were also listed, as was Fr Coppola, a churchman who was in charge of the welfare of Maltese in London.

and a memorable occasion for all concerned, where memories, good and bad, could be renewed or scored away in a comparatively relaxed ambience. The eighteenth July was strictly reserved for negotiations. It was a rather long conference.⁵

In the main, the parties rather went along with most provisions set out in the draft constitutional text they had before them. That contained ten chapters and various sub-chapters, which were *grosso modo* set out as follows: the State, including a Declaration of Principles; citizenship, which discounted dual citizenship; fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual; the organs of government; finance, the public service, etc. The small parties agreed to speak only on the understanding that they were against independence being granted at that stage or at all. In other words, they were discussing a document with the underlying principle of which they did not agree - for the object of discussing an Independence Constitution was surely with Independence in sight - but they hoped to delay or stop it, or at least to influence the outcome.

⁵ See the covering minutes to the programme, enc. MC(63)B.36, 926/1908/48543. The Chairman and the Secretary to the Malta Independence Conference 1963 Committee were Mr C.G.Eastwood and Mr W. M. Knighton respectively. The other members were, for the UK, Mr J.B.Sharp and Mr A.J.Fairclough; Dr V. Ragonesi (NP); Prof. J. J. Cremona qua Attorney General; Dr A. Buttigieg (MLP); Mr Dingle Foot (MLP Adviser); Dr D. Micallef (CWP); Dr A. Ganado (DNP), Dr C. Scicluna (PCP) and Prof. O. Hood Philips (PCP Adviser). At the conference itself those present under the chairmanship of Mr Sandys on the UK and Malta side respectively were: Marquess Lansdowne, Sir John Martin, Mr Eastwood, Mr J.M.Kisch and Mr A.J.Fairclough together with Wakefield and, as advisers, Mr J.C.McPetrie, Mr M.G. de Winton, Sir Charles Dixon and Mr C.W.St J. Chadwick; Borg Olivier, Felice, G.M.Camilleri, J. Cassar Galea, B. Camilleri (PN) with Ragonesi and Dr V. Tabone as advisers; Mintoff, Buttigieg, Attard Bezzina and Cremona (MLP) with Arthur J. Scerri and Mr J. Attard Kingswell as advisers; Pellegrini, Micallef and Mr A. Sammut as adviser (CWP); Ganado, Dr R. Farrugia and Dr A. Ganado as adviser (DNP); Strickland, Capt. V. Formosa and, as adviser, Dr C. Scicluna. In addition there were J.J. Cremona and Mr E. Cuschieri as Malta Government officials, and, from the Secretariat, MM. W.M.Knighton, E.W.J.Crawley, R.J.Harding and D.J.L.Moore.

There were some sticky points, the stickiest of all concerning the role of the Roman Catholic Church in public affairs. Here, as in some other areas, the parties were arguing either *ad hominem* (with Gonzi in mind) or out of their own experiences (especially Mintoff) as they perceived them, with a view to avoiding any repetition of such possibilities in future. Although the art of compromise was not regarded as exactly a Maltese trait, some slight modifications and arrangements were eventually reached after much haggling and repetition. The Malta Labour Party - which saw and portrayed itself as the aggrieved party - withdrew from the conference before this had finished on the ground that Sandys would not guarantee to have fresh elections called in Malta before Independence. The smaller parties continued to insist mainly on a referendum but Ganado and Pellegrini showed themselves prone to also play the Mintoff card of "fresh elections". In Malta newspaper coverage of the London talks was from different angles: the church side was taken care of mainly by the *Lehen is-Sewwa* and *Il-Haddiem* while the Moviment Azzjoni Socjali organ *Il-Qawmien* also made its voice heard; the Progress Press papers and the Union Press papers were fed information daily by their respective party representatives from London by telephone and otherwise; the MLP organ *Il-Helsien* carried day-by-day accounts, and the Nationalist *Il-Poplu* tried to catch up.

The opening speeches by the party leaders were predicatable. Mr Sandys gave a rehash of his "if... but" parting statement in Malta a few weeks earlier:

With regard to defence, we no longer have an absolute need for a military base in the Central Mediterranean. Nevertheless we would like to retain facilities in Malta for our forces, if this is acceptable to you. This again is a matter, which I propose to pursue with your Government if we reach agreement on the question of independence. However, it may well be your feeling that this important question should not be finally settled until after Malta has achieved her full sovereignty. If so, we would not wish to press you...

And again:

If you decide that independence is what you want, you will have to consider whether you wish to have it inside or outside the Commonwealth, I am sure you will be welcomed as a free and equal partner in this great world-wide association of sovereign nations. But whatever you decide on that, or on any other matter before us, of one thing I am certain: the friendship between Britain and Malta will remain unchanged...

If, however, the majority principle was what the British government would be guided by in concluding this business, Mr Sandys knew that he was playing with two majorities, both of which came up trumps. One majority he had was in favour of retaining close links with Britain, that to include Commonwealth membership; the other majority he had was in favour of independence as soon as possible. The component parts of these two majorities differed drastically, however. The former, which in electoral terms amounted to some 66%, comprised the pro-independence but security conscious Nationalist Party led by Borg Olivier, together with the three smaller parties led by Pellegrini, Ganado and Strickland. The latter were fearful of independence in principle or immediately, precisely because of perceived security risks coupled with economic unpreparedness. But Sandys knew there was another and a considerably larger majority: both Borg Olivier's *Nazzjonalisti* and Mintoff's *Laburisti* wanted independence. His chickens were hatched: a majority was in favour of immediate independence; another majority was in favour of retaining close ties with Britain. Whatever the disagreements about constitutional amendments, therefore, these ultimately amounted to questions of degree, form or timing, given that Britain now, rather suddenly, seemed ready to go along with the first premise: independence for Malta - if you want it, you can have it.

When Mintoff had demanded "immediate and full independence" in 1958 he had been told that was "quite unrealistic" and could not be a basis for negotiation. It was not quite but almost the "never" word used a few years earlier with regard to Cyprus. In his letter to Mintoff of 30th November 1958, the then Secretary of State, Lennox Boyd, had said that he "was not prepared to start discussions with a fixed

date for independence or with a view to fixing a date". While independence had not been excluded "as an aim", Britain then had indicated that apart from defence she also had to take account of the economic well being of Malta and her people. If the British left, they would be condemning the Maltese people to appalling poverty, mass unemployment and the extremes of hardship. To do so would be "completely contrary to Her Majesty's Government declared policy and would be regarded by the world as an irresponsible abdication of her international duties..." Independence - the British position then was - did not mean "just political independence. It demanded a high degree of economic independence as well..." Three years before that, the report of the all-party Malta Round Table Conference in 1955 had categorically stated, at paragraph 70, exactly as follows:

Having considered the special circumstances of Malta, we are obliged to reach the conclusion that the road to full self-government is blocked, in that the Parliament at Westminster must, in order to maintain the defence of Malta and the facilities necessary to enable it to fulfil its role as one of the principal Commonwealth and N.A.T.O. bases in the Mediterranean, exercise overriding powers in Malta in the fields of defence and foreign affairs. These requirements inevitably involve a limitation in possible advances open to the Maltese Parliament itself.⁶

Little wonder that Mabel Strickland started her opening address to the Malta Independence Conference on 16th July 1963 by saying:

In fact it was only on the 5th June that I learned for the first time that this country was willing, if pressed by what they term the two major parties, to lay down British sovereignty in Malta, and they very kindly said that we would take our queue in the Commonwealth for the continuance of financial aid...

⁶ See the confidential background brief entitled "Attitude of Her Majesty's Government in the Past to Independence for Malta", MC (6) B13, inc. annexes I-IV, quoting *verbatim* statements and communications, 926/1908/48543.

the people of Malta were totally unaware of that when the election was fought in 1962. That election was fought to my knowledge to keep out the honourable Leader of the Opposition, who speaks with a very different voice at Marlborough House to what his representations are at Tanganyika and at the United Nations, where we have Cambodia and Russia pressing for independence for Malta.⁷

The 5th June was a reference to Strickland's meeting with Sandys in Malta, when the charge of "desertion" had been levelled at him. The second reference was mainly to a Cambodia-sponsored resolution adopted by the UN's Committee of 24, which at Mintoff's behest had discussed Malta in early May. In Tanganyika Mintoff had attended a meeting of the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation in January. Actually seven other Afro-Asian members of the Committee of 24, in addition to Cambodia, had put forward the resolution favouring Malta's independence and the holding of fresh elections under the scrutiny of international observers, which however London (and Valletta) regarded as in no way binding, to say the least.⁸

Strickland's dismay at Britain's changed posture was amply shared by Ganado and Pellegrini. Apart from other considerations, these like Strickland did not trust Mintoff's party at all. The prospect of a "Cuba in the Mediterranean" was again mentioned more than once. Malta's independence was being negotiated against the backdrop of a Cold War in full swing, with fresh memories of the Khrushchev-Kennedy missile crisis over Cuba, the scare of a nuclear world war in 1962, let alone the Communist takeover in Castro's Cuba in 1959, whose dependence on Russian aid was growing. If Harold Wilson's well-

⁷ These proceedings are contained with the original correspondence; official statements appear in a report on the conference which was published. The opening speeches and extracts from the new Constitution may also be consulted in Henry Frendo, *Maltese Political Development, 1798-1964; A Documentary History* (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Valletta, 1993), pp. 885-915.

⁸ See the confidential background note 'United Nations Resolution on Malta', inc. Annex 1, M.C. (63) B. 16, 926/1908/48543.



The Hon. Miss Mabel Strickland, Leader of the Progressive Constitutional Party and its only M.P., was an owner and the overall managing director of Malta's largest printing and publishing establishment, the Progress Press, which her father Lord Strickland (d. 1940) had set up in the 1920s. In the Sixties this included the daily newspapers *The Times of Malta* and *Il-Berqa*, and a weekly, *The Sunday Times of Malta*. Inset: Miss Strickland with Mr Pellegrini and Mr Mintoff.

worn quip about a week being a long time in politics were taken to heart, Britain's round-about-turn on Malta at such a time must rank as millenary. The Suez fiasco, the 1957 Defence White Paper and other factors, even Mintoff, came in between one phase and another. In this drill Mintoff too got caught because in the space of a few months in 1957-1958 he had changed track from a policy of full integration with Britain to one of full independence from her. Borg Olivier's Nationalists and their predecessors had been talking of Dominion Status - by which they increasingly meant independence within the Commonwealth - since the Statute of Westminster, 1931.

Britain's "no" in 1955 even to "full self-government" for Malta had ante-dated the Suez crisis of 1956, but her refusal to consider any discussion of independence in 1958 had not: that was in the wake of the failed (but well and truly tried) prospect of Malta's integration as a part of the U.K. It was after the "British Get Out" fireworks, a disappointing *interregnum*, and a political change of guard in Malta in 1962 - coinciding with the quickening implementation of Britain's newly defined defence priorities and retrenchment policies after 1957 - that what had been so impossible in the late fifties had become so possible in the early sixties.

Not just the economic situation in Britain but the mood itself towards 'surrendering colonies', any colonies, had changed. Was that solely and simply as a result of the drastic defence cuts in overall policy? Was it because by 1960 Britain, in a tripartite agreement involving Greece and Turkey, had relieved herself of Cyprus as a troublesome colony to the East while retaining for herself two sovereign military bases there? In addition to Gibraltar on the Mediterranean's northern shore in the West, Britain also had a presence on the southern shore of the Central Mediterranean, mainly through its air base at El Adem in Libya, where the Americans had a larger complex at Wheelus. Was it the better aircraft carriers, equipped with nuclear warheads, and the longer-range transport facilities, that rendered Malta dispensable? Was this reverse on Malta just one more 'abdication' in a long row, the game no longer being worth the candle? Was it to some extent also *realpolitik*, making hay while the sun shone? After all, whether by circumstance or design, Malta had asked for it: independence. And the matter was pressing, for Sandys and his Tories were due to face a general election in the Autumn of the following year (which, as it turned out, they lost). There were good devils and bad devils: Britain had come to know the ones in Malta well enough by now. Maltese would think and say much the same of their British 'counter-parts', administrators and politicians - as indeed several of them, whether in the language of Dante or of Shakespeare, had been doing for a very long time.

The overriding importance given to Catholicism and to the

Church's position during the Malta Independence Conference may be seen from the amendments tabled to the Nationalist draft. Amendments proposed by the Malta Labour Party sought to restrict and to redress that position, whereas those proposed by the smaller parties sought further to protect and to enshrine it. These amendments were the main bone of contention between the Nationalists and Socialists. For these amendments and counter-amendments to make sense, Malta's recent past has to be kept in mind, in particular the bitter clashes and recriminations between Mr Mintoff and Archbishop Gonzi since the 1950s. The unfolding battle ("*glieda*" in Maltese, which actually means a fight) was dominated by two strong-minded and stong-willed characters who represented and symbolised opposed world-views.⁹ Mintoff, a rumbustious leftie nicknamed "il-Bolxevist" since his student days and later, while living in England, reputed to be a Fabian, had first attracted Gonzi's ire when on his return to Malta after the war he had been involved in the singing of the Hymn to the Red Flag with party supporters in a seaside restaurant. Gonzi was a princely conservative, an authoritarian Roman Catholic prelate and, ironically a former Senator of the Malta Labour Party whose initially doubtful loyalty to the British Crown had not stopped him from rising to the episcopacy. According to *The Economist* of 20th 1963 July the Maltese church hierarchy was "at least two Popes behind" in its views on the church's function in politics, while *The Guardian* of 17th July 1963 quoted Ganado as confirming that the church had "rightfully exercised great influence on the (1962) election."

Archbishop Gonzi saw himself as pastor to the one Maltese flock, protecting them from any approaching wolf, be it in sheep's clothing or otherwise. Traditionally the bishop had tended to be regarded by British governors of Malta as the islands' first citizen, a spokesman and interlocutor for the population at large. In protocol he was second after the Governor, before the Prime Minister. Such

⁹ On this see the introductory remarks above, I, 4; but see esp. below, I, 9 and 10; III, 16; and *passim*.

unchallenged pride of place was being slowly chipped starting in the nineteenth century, when forceful laymen like Dr Fortunat Mizzi and later his son Nerik became leaders of newly-formed political parties dominating public debate. Worse still for the hierarchy, there were rare instances of some audacious unorthodox critic, like the excommunicated and exiled Protestant-inspired Manwel Dimech (whom Archbishop Gonzi in 1971 still regarded as an "anti-Christ") castigating the ecclesiastical establishment's hegemony of power.¹⁰ Times were very slowly changing, although in colonial Malta the church had since 1800 found in Britain a strong protector and ally, Protestant proselytizers notwithstanding. Mintoff would not push for guarantees desired by Gonzi in the impending Integration Act before the referendum on Integration in 1956, nor until 1958 would Mintoff consent to returning two Caravaggio masterpieces from the national museum to St John's co-cathedral in Valletta, from where he had taken them in the first place.

Gonzi was out on a limb with Mintoff's party when he publicly condemned the violent rioting in April 1958 following Mintoff's resignation. In this respect Mintoff had shown his mettle earlier still, when in protest at a unilateral radio announcement by the Governor to fishermen to keep clear of flying-boats evacuating British civilians from Egypt in 1956, he had the Rediffusion cables cut by supporters. At the time of the independence negotiations, Mintoff's MLP were still giving as one of their 'six points' a recourse to violence when necessary. While soliciting attention, this may well have been an error of judgement, but that was how under Mintoff's direction the MLP still felt about it. Briefly, by 1961 the MLP executive had been interdicted, together with the MLP newspapers, in an escalating confrontation where MLP leaders and supporters were subjected to moral and ecclesiastical sanctions, exposed to mortal sin and eternal damnation, barred from the sacraments. This (historically not

¹⁰ On this see e.g. A. Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta* (The Netherlands, 1981); Henry Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, *Birth Pangs of a Nation: Manwel Dimech's Malta, 1860-1921* (Valletta, 1972), and *Story of a Book* (Malta, 1972).

unfamiliar scenario for Malta) must be understood in the texture of a Southern European society in the second half of the twentieth century where the very lifestyle of most people still rotated on church-related functions, from baptismal font to confessional, from family to classroom, the parish *fešta*, and all the *rites de passage*. *Mintoffjani* retaliated and became more extremist: Mintoff called his followers "soldiers of steel" (presumably to distinguish them from "soldiers of Christ", as the religious organisations called their members).

Perhaps *in extremis* in 1961 Mintoff, allegedly without his executive's consent, affiliated his party to the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation, which was generally seen as a Communist front, while he also sought closer ties with the Socialist International. Gonzi's church however was still quoting the 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* which held that you could not at one and the same time be a Catholic and a Socialist - not even a "moderate" one. Electoral manifestoes and party traditions apart, such indeed was the main context in which the 1962 general elections had been conducted. Understandably, therefore, what the MLP sought to obtain above all else in 1963 were constitutional safeguards ensuring freedom of conscience, equality before the law for all, and some such civil rights as would be acceptable in a secular state, including civil marriage. Such rights loosening the church's grip also stood to benefit them, or at least not to damage them, politically as a party.

The MLP had other positions which challenged the Nationalist draft constitution. Some of these may have been more political than constitutional, while others could be regulated through ordinary legislation following parliamentary debate and, ultimately, through the natural democratic cycle of alternating succession by means of party government. The MLP wanted to press the point that since what they were proposing was essentially different to what the PN in government were submitting, there should be no independence before fresh and early elections were called in Malta. This was a political demand, not a constitutional one. A substantially different constitutional model on offer was grist to its mill: the electorate

would have a choice. Malta, the MLP held, should be a republic not a constitutional monarchy, with a democratically elected President as Head of State. To the President not to the Monarch, would allegiance be sworn. Whether Malta would remain a member of the Commonwealth or not should only be decided after Malta would have become independent - and that, again, only after fresh elections would have been called. The George Cross should no longer feature in Malta's national flag.¹¹

The administration's draft was obviously more acceptable to the smaller parties, as well as to the British, than the MLP's would have been on this score. Borg Olivier was electorally committed to independence within the Commonwealth. His ambition now was to seek and to ensure that Malta's difficult transition from colonialism to statehood would be as smooth as possible, with a fair mix between change and continuity. In the circumstances of the time, Borg Olivier's approach was more cautious and pragmatic whereas Mintoff's was more idealistic and unpredictable.

Some of the MLP's recommendations were complementary to what the Borg Olivier administration was proposing, some being somewhat legalistic, more specific or far-reaching. The MLP upheld devolution through the creation of autonomous and elective local councils; it wanted the rights of asylum respected; it opposed *refoulement*. Mintoff at Marlborough House strove to present himself and his party as the champions of tolerance and progress, the victims of intolerance and reaction.

On citizenship, one of the debating points, the MLP would grant Maltese who had obtained another passport the right to be treated as Maltese citizens while they stayed in Malta without being forced

¹¹ All amendments are included in the original correspondence, but they were also published together with the draft of the proposed independence constitution in 1963. Minutes of the 19 sessions, 16 July - 1 Aug., background papers and other conference exchanges are mainly in the six volumes 926/1907 - 926/1912. According to the MLP minutes Mintoff's proposal to join AAPSO was unanimously approved by the executive in January 1961.

to renounce to their other passport. Those whom they had in mind were persons entitled to become citizens of Malta who "for reasons of residence or employment abroad or employment with the British forces in Malta" elected not to accept the citizenship thereby conferred. Persons who, for such reasons, elected not to accept the citizenship "will nevertheless be considered as citizens of Malta during their stay in Maltese territory." Daunted by the prospect of an exclusive reliance on the new Maltese citizenship, the CWP and PCP positions variously labelled under the headings of "co-citizenship" and "interdependence" would have favoured the right of at least dual citizenship albeit in different ways, mostly through the British/Commonwealth connection. The Nationalists, faced by the spectre of the rundown, were wary of the possibility that many overseas Maltese would or could suddenly flock 'back' to a struggling, independent Malta, thereby becoming a strain on the public purse in a small, already densely populated archipelago.

Maltese citizenship was clearly a proud prerogative of the new statehood. But it was also true that there was much talent and even wealth among the Maltese *diaspora* which could be somehow garnered to Malta's benefit, while it was unlikely that too many people would suddenly abandon their homes, jobs and lifestyles to return to Malta especially if, on arrival, they would have to surrender their other dearly earned and secured citizenships. Those who had retained or applied for Maltese citizenship in time would be able to repatriate anyway. Most Maltese settled in northern Africa had left by this time and taken up residence in France, the U.K., Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, Italy, southern Africa and elsewhere. In the course of time and generations, thousands of others descended from Maltese stock had become assimilated - Hellenized, Frencified, Americanized, Australianized or otherwise 'indigenized' - and if they ever returned to Malta few would not go simply as sojourners for a holiday or out of curiosity.

In the end however, here as in most cases, the principles and the terminology of the Maltese administration's draft prevailed. Sandys, for one, had taken to it - "a very admirable job", "a most excellent basis for discussion", he called it. "Nice words", Professor Cremona

was only too pleased to recall years later, “to the point of embarrassment”.¹²

Long and complicated discussions took place on other issues, such as the validation of laws, within which time-frame exactly and to what extent; what to entrench or not and how; but also, given the drift of the conference, on such terms as “moral” or “spiritual” in safeguarding against what in Britain were known as “corrupt practices”. This was on MLP insistence. Basing itself on the British model ensuring against undue influence, as embodied in the Representation of the People Act, the MLP’s stand was palatable to British public opinion: in fact “corrupt practices” remained on the bargaining table until the very end of the Anglo-Maltese negotiations.

The discussion on electoral law terminology took the legal advisers all the way back to the nineteenth century, to exchanges and amendments concerning a Maltese electoral law enacted in 1924. That had involved the then Head of Ministry, Dr Francesco Buhagiar, the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Gerald Strickland, and Dr Enrico Mizzi, leader of the Democratic Nationalist Party.¹³ In 1963, should the phraseology on unacceptable electoral influences now read “temporal and spiritual”, as in the original British text of 1883, or should it rather read “material and moral”?

In drafting that law, Dr Buhagiar, Malta’s second premier under Self-Government, had drawn upon the U.K.’s Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, 1883, which had since been replaced by the penal provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1949. Nerik Mizzi however had moved that the word “moral”, which may have had a rather wider radius, substitute the word “spiritual”. The amendment was opposed by Gerald Strickland, but Buhagiar then went along with Mizzi. When asked for an opinion now, forty years later, the Crown’s legal advisers in London refused to give it, saying that they did not know enough about the Maltese situation, not

¹² J. J. Cremona, “Recollections of Constitution-making”, *op.cit.*, p. XII.

¹³ Decades later, Ganado’s party was named like it.

sufficiently to figure out what the difference between the terms implied exactly. More insightfully and not without a touch of humour, the Crown Counsel in Valletta Dr Victor Frendo put it thus to his opposite number the perplexed Legal Adviser in London B. G. Smith, in words which the latter made his own:

On the information at present before him Dr Frendo, Crown Counsel, is inclined to agree with me that the probable intention of the Assembly was that the clergy should not be fettered. We know that Strickland intended to fetter the clergy, we know that Dr Mizzi did not. What we do not know is whether the other members accepted the amendment because they remembered the Prime Minister saying that for him the two expressions had the same meaning, or whether they agreed with Dr Mizzi.¹⁴

On the church and religion question, the Borg Olivier draft (in article 2 of chapter 1 entitled "The State") established Roman Catholicism as Malta's religion. Religion would also be taught in all state schools, etc. The smaller parties wanted more. In separate but identical amendments to article 2 it was proposed, particularly by Ganado's party, that the following clause be added:

The Roman Catholic religion and the Roman Catholic church in Malta shall continue to enjoy all those rights, privileges and prerogatives, in accordance with the law of Malta and the code of Canon Law, obtaining on the appointed day.

By contrast, the Malta Labour Party brought out from its sanctions cupboard a procession of skeletons, each one to proclaim hand on chest that the Maltese church should *not* continue to enjoy all those rights, privileges and prerogatives. They would change section 24 ("Protection of freedom of expression"), to read, *inter alia*, as follows:

¹⁴ See the confidential "Note on the Parliamentary History of Section 71 (f) of the Electoral Law, 1924 (No. XIV of 1924)", by B. G. Smith, Legal Adviser, 25 Sept. 1963, 926/1913.

The holding of holy ceremonies in places of worship close to the public thoroughfares where a public meeting or demonstration is to be held shall not serve as a pretext for the Authorities to forbid the public meeting or demonstration.

The police are empowered to enter places of worship even during the performance of sacred functions to stop the ringing of bells or other nuisances that may disturb public order during public meetings.

No person shall be considered to have offended religious sentiment if he maintains his arguments within the limits of reasonable discussion without resorting to vilification...

Dr Ganado, a devout Catholic lawyer and confidante of Archbishop Gonzi who had edited the church paper *Lehen is-Sewwa* for some years, moderated this amendment with another one, which laid down that meetings in a public place could be forbidden on grounds of public security, public order, etc.,

provided that the previous notification of the holding of another meeting in the neighbourhood and the holding of a holy ceremony (arranged previously to the proposed meeting) in the neighbourhood shall be deemed to be a sufficient reason for forbidding the proposed meeting.

While accepting that the religion of Malta would be the Roman Catholic, the Labour Party held that all religious denominations should be "equally free" before the law, while no person would be subject to any disability or be excluded from holding "any office" by reason of his religious profession. Such provisions, while carefully worded, bore on other delicate matters, such as school teachers, education, and broadcasting - another 'hot potato' of Malta since the mid-fifties.

The church objected to it being denied the so-called *privilegium fori*, whereby those in communion with the church should not bring clergymen before the secular courts without the permission of the competent ecclesiastical authority. In Malta the state still recognised

the church's claim and applied for permission in official proceedings to bring a priest before the court, whereas in private cases the onus for obtaining permission lay with the plaintiff. Permission was usually granted by the Archbishop without delay, but a plaintiff who proceeded without the permission required disclosed by his action that he was not in, or was prepared to leave, the communion of the church.

Although many thought that the exemption of the Maltese bishops from criminal proceedings resulted from *privilegium fori*, it was regarded actually as a direct provision of the Criminal Code. There was a long-standing argument as to whether *privilegium fori* had continued to exist despite Proclamation V of 1828, which had abolished the temporal jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts. The 1963 draft constitution was sufficiently liberal at least in its declaration of principles to render all this open to serious question, but the MLP wanted the prevention of privilege to be constitutionally and therefore unequivocally enforceable at law.

The MLP also moved that civil marriage - and arguably, at least indirectly, divorce - be made possible through constitutional provisions, although it took care to exclude Catholics from both acts. Whether that would include lapsed Catholics was not disclosed. It was perhaps these proposals which, generally speaking, were the most resented of all by the church and the parties faithful to it. They were seen as an uncalled for importation from abroad, an attempt to weaken the traditionally Catholic and united Maltese family, the backbone of society.

Further to the situation then prevailing in the validity and nullity of marriages subject to Canon Law and the ecclesiastical Court, the MLP requested (under section 1 in the second part of chapter 3) that the law provide "also for marriages to be celebrated before a public registrar or the recognised minister of some other religion", in which case they would not be subject to Canon Law. Marriages "celebrated according to Canon Law" or where any of the contracting parties was a Catholic, would not be "soluble by divorce." (All marriages

celebrated differently, in other words, were; and when faced by a broken marriage the chance to divorce might *ipso facto* render one or both the parties non-Catholic, or ex-Catholic.)

While such proposals would not have been regarded as unduly disconcerting or unusual in Britain or elsewhere in Europe or the Americas in the 1960s, given the church's role in Maltese public life and the incensed feelings of the anti-Mintoffian electorate, there was no way in which any of the other political parties were going to agree to them, either for religious or for political motives or both. Sensing that, and faced by a refusal to guarantee fresh elections, in a gesture which would have aroused sympathy in Britain, the MLP walked out of the conference, having made its points.

The writing was on the wall. Shortly before the parties went up to London, an announcement was made by the Archbishop's Curia in Valletta, under the signature Bishop Emmanuel Galea, to say that while the church would like to make peace with the MLP it was not possible to do so on the conditions being mentioned by Mr Mintoff. While on a recent visit to Rome, Mintoff had referred to six points, the bishop said. These were summarized by the Curia as being:

1. The separation of Church and State;
2. The State should be "secularist" and should treat all religions equally;
3. The acceptance of civil marriage;
4. *Privilegium fori* should be limited;
5. Censorship of films and books should be carried out exclusively by Government, and the Church would be unable to interfere; and
6. In certain cases violence is admissible.

Before entering into the merit of any of these points, Bishop Galea noted that, first of all,

the Ecclesiastical Authority of these Islands will never approve of a political party, which prides itself as being

socialist, so long as the Supreme Authority of the Church continues to teach, as it has taught up to now, that Catholics cannot embrace any type of socialism, even that which calls itself moderate...¹⁵

The Maltese church would keep up and even step up the pressure against any dilution of her role in the new constitution. It was to take much effort, behind the scenes, to reach some kind of respectable compromise before a bill could be put before the British parliament for approval, although other denominations (and of course Mintoff's party) continued to protest until the end.¹⁶

But there was another sticky question: the referendum. The small parties had been drumming on this all the time, underlining that they were not there to endorse independence but to postpone or even (in the Strickland case) to prevent it. They wanted to define "the appointed day", that is the day appointed for Malta to become independent on, as:

the day after the expiration of ninety days from the declaration in the Gazette that a referendum on the question 'DO YOU WANT INDEPENDENCE NOW?' has had an affirmative result.

Not only would they have a referendum, they would also word the question put. However, the MLP would have none of this, its position on independence having long been abundantly clear. They pledged to boycott any such referendum. The PN too saw no reason for a referendum, because they had an electoral mandate to obtain independence. Borg Olivier did not have an absolute majority of the popular vote, he only had a relative one of 42%; but he had 26 out of the 50 MPs in the House, so in the last resort, with

¹⁵ 'Statement by the Church Authority', sgd. Mgr. E. Galea, Vicar General, Archbishop's Curia, Valletta, 22 May 1963, enc. 926/912/48583.

¹⁶ See below, esp. I, 10; and III, 16.

independence at stake, he could call the shots and be damned.¹⁷ Sandys, too, was not too keen on this referendum, because he reckoned it would be unreliable, that if people voted by party, much the same results as those of the recent general election would be likely. However, faced by the insistent disagreement between the parties and their respective fixed positions, and in an effort to find some way out, he tried nudging his way in favour of this expedient. Borg Olivier came round to agreeing to a referendum provided that all the other parties would agree to it. But the MLP had already said they disagreed and would boycott it if held. The small parties therefore left the conference table as well.

With some minor understandings and compromises in the course of the discussions over nearly two weeks, the Maltese parties had agreed only in so far as they disagreed: they had not agreed to any of the issues of substance on which they had disagreed, be it the place due to religion and the church, or the holding of a referendum and even less fresh elections.

The British Government therefore decided for them. "In these circumstances", Sandys began his concluding address at Marlborough House on 1 August:

there was no longer any justification for withholding a decision on the Malta Government's application for independence, supported as it was by the results of the 1962 elections, which, in the opinion of the British Government, showed that a substantial majority of the Maltese people wanted early independence.

¹⁷ Under proportional representation counting of votes could vary, depending on whether one listed the votes obtained on the first or at the last count. In fact the % vote obtained by the PN in 1962 on the first count went up until the last count because almost all of those voting for the four smaller parties contesting (three of which returned MPs) transferred their preferences to the PN. On the independence referendum see below, I, 9.



With a wreath placed around his neck, Borg Olivier is seen here greeted by members of his family and supporters on arrival from London.



He accordingly announced that:

Her Majesty's Government had decided that Malta should become independent on a date not later than 31st May 1964.

If in further endeavours to agree upon joint constitutional proposals the Maltese parties failed to do so, the British Government could not divest itself of its share of responsibility for Malta's future constitution. Nevertheless, it was probable that the British Government would feel able "to accept any provisions agreed by the Maltese parties". In the absence of agreement, "the outstanding issues could be referred for decision either to the people of Malta or to the British Government..."¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Malta Independence Conference, 1963 - Report by the Chairman', 1 Aug. 1963, enc. 926/1912/48583.

Breaking the Deadlock

POLITICS, TRADITION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The news that Malta would become independent by 31st May 1964 was first broken by the World Service of the BBC in its 5 p.m. news bulletin on Friday 1st August. Hailed as a triumph by one side and as a betrayal by the other, it electrified the country.¹ A great challenge lay ahead.

In the Autumn of 1963 the pace began to quicken. Borg Olivier was in London in September and again in November. In December, he went up again, this time together with the leaders of the other four parties, for another round of December talks. Meanwhile, things were heating up in Malta as well. In Rome Archbishop Gonzi met Paul VI, who gave him what was interpreted as a signed letter of support, announced by the Archbishop during a press conference he gave in Valletta on 18th September (to which the MLP's vigorous church-banned newspaper organ *Il-Helsien* was not invited). All this further kindled rather than pacified the flames. In a letter to Sandys countering an earlier one by Mintoff, Gonzi denied that it was

¹ See the banner headlines in e.g. *L-Orizzont* and *The Times of Malta*, 2 Aug. 1963.

necessary to obtain permission from parish priests to hold political meetings, nor were ordinary religious ceremonies to be regarded as reasons for banning such meetings.²

The MLP was holding and attending meetings here and there, inaugurating a new headquarters, parading the issues of human rights and fresh elections, resorting to more fiery language, denouncing the blue pencil vetting of its public broadcasting texts by the authorities, and actually asking that if by 31st May Malta had still not become independent on its terms, the UN should take over the administration of the Island *ad interim*.³

Various British officials visited Malta on different errands, including defence. The Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the C.O., Sir John Martin, accompanied under cover by a senior Defence Ministry official (Mr Stephens), was in Malta from 24th to 28th November.⁴ (Some time later Lansdowne also visited Malta.) For Malta it was necessary to start financial discussions as soon as possible, preferably before the next budget. At the same time, there was a sneaking suspicion in London that Mintoﬀ actually wanted to play for time in anticipation of a possible Labour victory at the forthcoming British general election, on the assumption that he might get a better deal with them than with the Tories. Mintoﬀ had a few staunch Labour friends there, such as Barbara Castle, as may be discerned from several parliamentary questions in the Commons.

In fact, the Maltese and British Labour parties were not altogether on the same wavelength, probably because of foreign policy. For example, at the eighth congress of the Socialist International in

² Local Intelligence Committee (Malta) Report (henceforth Int. rep.), 5 Sept.-4 Oct. 1963, sec., f. 1, para. 2-3, 926/1822, 48655.

³ Int. rep. 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., f. 1, para. 3, 926/1822/48655.

⁴ Int. rep. 6 Nov. - 5 Dec. 1963, f. 1, para. 4, sec., 926/1822/48655.



Discussions about the defence agreement were the subject of a number of visits to Malta especially in 1964. The picture shows (from left): Dr Borg Olivier's secretary Mr George Borg; Mr F. W. Mottershead, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Defence heading this delegation; Mr Ian Watt, Deputy UK Commissioner; Mr John Kisch, Head of the C.O.'s Mediterranean Dept.; Mr B. B. Hall, from the Treasury Solicitor's Dept.; Mr F. H. Mower (largely hidden) of the Admiralty; and Mr F. J. Stephens from the Defence Ministry.

Amsterdam, the British Labour Party delegation would not propose an MLP motion although it would back it because, Tom Driberg told Anton Buttigieg, the British Labour Party did not entirely agree with the MLP's stand. Mintoff was openly critical of the British party for that, saying that if necessary they would fight them in future as they had fought them in the past.⁵ Generally speaking, that was all the more reason to hurry up the Independence process, to get it over and done with, and particularly so from a Tory point of view.

Outlining Britain's policies and legislative programme for the fifth session of the forty-second Parliament of the UK, the Queen's Speech to both Houses of Parliament on 12th November 1963, committed the British Government to introduce bills "to provide for the independence of Kenya, Malta, Nyasaland and Zanzibar, and to provide a new Constitution for the Bahamas." As a result of the successful outcome of the Victoria Falls Conference, proposals would also be laid before Parliament to transfer the responsibilities of the Government of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland to the territorial Governments. Her Majesty noted with satisfaction the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in Moscow, pledged to continue to support the freedom of West Berlin and to seek solutions to the problems of European security and Germany, to support the UN, NATO and the European Free Trade Association, while at the same time continuing to work "for the strength and unity of Europe, through the Council of Europe and the Western European Union." Her Ministers believed that the Commonwealth had "a significant part to play in ensuring stability and peace in the world", she emphasised; and they would continue to take "all possible steps to strengthen the links between the Governments, and peoples, of the Commonwealth", also in their efforts to expand world trade.⁶

In his address in reply, Lord Tweedsmuir noted how Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had seen "the Colonies turning into nations" and

⁵ Int.. rep., 5 Sept.-4 Oct. 1963, sec., ff. 3-4, para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

⁶ Hansard, 5th ser., vol. ccliii, Lords, 12 Nov. 1963, cols. 1-3.

“with this history made in the last decade with such furious momentum”, the historians would always link her name. To his mind, these newer nations were “the greatest achievement of the British race.” In support he quoted the Marquess of Hastings (whose greatest claim to fame was not his consolation retirement posting in Malta as her governor at the age of 70, from 1824 to 1826, although that coincidence becomes a pertinent one here). The former British general Rawdon Hastings famous in Canada after he lost out to George Washington in the American War of Independence, had as early as 1818 noted in his journal that a time would arrive when England would, on sound principles of policy, wish to relinquish the domination that she had “gradually and unintentionally” assumed over India (whose Governor-General Hastings was from 1813 to 1821). In that hour it would be “the proudest boast and most delightful reflection” that she had used her sovereignty “towards enlightening her temporary subjects so as to enable the native communities to walk alone in the paths of justice.” A lot of that, Tweedsmuir told his Lords, had come about, as he welcomed the mention in the Queen’s Speech of “the independence of Kenya, Nyasaland, Zanzibar and Malta, and of a new Constitution for the Bahamas.” In heartily wishing them well, he gave vent to some ponderous thoughts, heavy with true blue nostalgia as much as with a premonition of future faltering:

The making of a new nation is a moment of triumph. But unless that nation be a free nation, there is no triumph. In wishing them well from the bottom of our hearts, let us also fervently hope that, in these new nations, men of all races will be able to live free and equal as citizens; that their Governments will rest on the maximum attainable degree of consent; and that they will say in their enactments: ‘This is not fair because it is the law, but it is the law because it is fair.’

Tweedsmuir also referred subtly to Britain’s desire to join the E.E.C., from which so far she was being rebuffed by France. As a Scotsman, he referred to the ‘common market’ Scotland and England had formed between them at the end of the eighteenth century, which permitted Scotland to trade with the English colonies. The benefits

hung fire for a time, but within a lifetime the population of Scotland rose by two-thirds and her revenue by 51 times:

Now people see this thing, so often, in hard and fast rules, either for the Commonwealth or for Europe. Great is the perplexity of someone like me who has both outlooks at the same time. But I believe that they can be reconciled by careful and patient statesmanship. It was Dean Inge who said that: 'History never repeats itself, but it frequently resembles itself.'⁷

In spite of all this political rhetoric, so far as Malta's Independence was concerned the existing deadlock still had to be broken, somehow. Who could break it? If the die was cast for Independence, was that so too for the deadlock overshadowing it?

One likely opposition strategem in the hope of wrecking the prospect of early Independence for Malta appeared to be that of an alliance of convenience between the MLP on one hand and the small parties on the other. This alternative seemed increasingly tempting as the year drew to a close in an attempt to force Borg Olivier's hand. All together, the Opposition parties still could not muster enough votes to defeat a motion in the Maltese Parliament, but a common front would exercise moral and political pressure on the British, as well as on the Nationalist administration. They could all oppose Independence unless this or that happened first, especially early elections; but ultimately what they really wanted to happen was quite different. There was no consensus there. If such a common front were put up for tactical reasons in favour of fresh elections, where would that leave the church? If and when another Independence package came, what would that be like then? What about the British Government, which had now committed itself not only to Independence for Malta, but also to a date for it? As year's end approached, that date was only five months away.

⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 9, col. 13.

The only possible way out of this morass was for Borg Olivier to agree to some form of electoral consultation before Independence. If so, what would that be? Fresh elections, less than halfway through his term of office, with the possibility that the administration might lose its one seat majority, possibly resulting in a hung Parliament? A referendum, as the small parties had been clamouring for? If so, what would that be about exactly? In a referendum, how far would the party allegiances shift? Another possible scenario was a behind-the-scenes compromise brokered directly with the Holy See which would make the Maltese hierarchy swallow hard but take the wind out of Mintoff's sails, and ensure support in the British Houses of Parliament for a Malta Independence Bill. But how far would the Holy See, even if it were rather more liberally inclined, wish to be seen as letting 'its side' in Malta down? And that to please the likes of Mintoff? In late September a whisper attempt at some mediation between the church and the MLP through Mintoff's brother, the monk Dionysius, came to nothing.⁸ Here was a chicken-and-egg situation: would Mintoff first withdraw his 'six points' in return for which the church would readily lift its interdict, or vice-versa? No deal there; neither side seemed ready to concede anything.

Judging by the nature of the conversation he had with Sandys in London on Monday 23rd September following his return from America over the week-end, Borg Olivier hoped that he would obtain some specific information on what financial aid Malta could expect after independence. He might thus have had something up his sleeve before facing the Maltese political parties again. At about the same time that Borg Olivier went to the U.S.A., Dr Felice, his Minister of Industrial Development and Tourism, went to Rome for a conference on tourism and to sound out the possibility of Italian financial aid to Malta.⁹ Financial considerations

⁸ Int.. rep., 5 Oct.-6 Nov., sec., f. 2, para. 5, 926/1822/48655.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Sept.-4 Oct. 1963, sec., f. 2, para. 6, 926/1822/48655.

could evidently also bear on a decision whether or not to hold a referendum about Independence, and in that case how to pitch the question.

In the course of the conversation during the 23rd September meeting, Sandys said he would prefer to get Independence through well before May, say by February. However, there were two things that were worrying him. The first was the allegations that would be made in London (as well as in Malta) that there should first be an election. The second was "the more extreme passages" in the Nationalist draft Constitution about the Church. Although Borg Olivier did not say so explicitly, the two things that were most on *his* mind were what financial aid would be forthcoming after Independence, and stopping or slowing down the Dockyard discharges. What also emerges from this discussion is a recognition of Archbishop Gonzi's pivotal role in Maltese politics: whether it would be early elections or a referendum or both, Borg Olivier saw the Church's position as crucial. An unstated outcome of the meeting was that Sandys was the one pressing for momentum to build up in order that the schedule his administration had set for Malta's Independence would be met, whereas Borg Olivier on his part kept prodding about the money and the jobs. Once the British Government was now officially committed to a date - and that commitment would soon after this meeting be enshrined in the Queen's Speech, a few weeks later - it seemed as if delay and the leisurely pace with which in any case Borg Olivier was more comfortable, could become a bargaining chip in Malta's hands. When Sandys spoke of an impending decision to discharge an undetermined amount of workers from the Dockyard, Borg Olivier played a Mintoff card and threatened instant resignation, taking Sandys unawares.

This London meeting of 23rd September, for which Lansdowne and Eastwood were also present with Sandys, began slowly by a rambling overview of how the parties were behaving, although Sandys started by saying that he wished to discuss with Borg Olivier "the next steps" following the Constitutional conference and "the decision that Malta should become independent." Borg Olivier said

that the smaller parties were a bit sour. They were reluctant to accept that Independence was coming and would do their best "to make nuisances of themselves but they did not amount to much in Malta."

Referring to the meeting he had had with Mintoﬀ, Borg Olivier painted a rather bright picture of it. Mintoﬀ, he said, had been "quite reasonable". He was thoroughly committed to Independence. Indeed, he added, he was taking the credit for having persuaded the British Government to take the decision to give Independence. Mintoﬀ did not want any referendum because he was asking for something to secure the rights of a minority and that would clearly never be conceded by a referendum determined by the majority. According to Borg Olivier, Mintoﬀ seemed rather to prefer that the British Government should take their own decisions on the points of difference between the two constitutions because he thought they would give him something.¹⁰ This posture was much the same as that reported upon at this time by the Local Intelligence Committee in Malta; nor was it far removed from doubts about the usefulness of holding inter-party discussions expressed by the Government in the Speech from the Throne on 28th October. While the attitude of the smaller parties against early Independence appeared to have hardened, the MLP had commented that there was scarcely any reason for holding any discussions as they had little or no faith in their usefulness. They had therefore said that H.M.G. should "shoulder its responsibility" and decide all the outstanding issues, ensuring that democratic principles as pronounced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were inserted in the Constitution. The GWU echoed this view, saying that the major parties should follow

¹⁰ Detailed minutes of this meeting were recorded in a 'Note of a discussion between the Secretary of State and Dr Borg Olivier in the Secretary of State's room ...', which was typed and carbon copied immediately afterwards, hereafter referred to as 'Note of a discussion between the Secretary of State and Dr Borg Olivier', 926/1915/48583.

the example of political parties in British Guiana and leave it to H.M.G. to decide.¹

What reasons would Mintoff give for refusing to co-operate in a referendum, Sandys asked pointedly. If his object were to preserve the rights of a minority, how would an election benefit him more than a referendum? Presumably he would only get a minority in an election. Borg Olivier said that people who would vote against Mintoff on religious points would probably vote for him at an election. However if there was an election he was inclined to think that he (Dr Borg Olivier) would get back with approximately the same number of seats as at present. He thought it might be worth considering an election if he could know "the terms of a financial agreement with Britain first." Sandys however was all against an election fought on the basis of a financial agreement since "whatever it was, the M.L.P. would be sure to say that they would have done better and it would be contrary to nature if the Nationalists said that they were fully satisfied."

Sandys was inclined to think that after consultations with the parties, the next step should then be a referendum. Borg Olivier thought that Miss Strickland would eventually fall in with his views; "she was in some ways the most sensible of the three small parties." Of the other two, Pellegrini wanted first to know what financial agreement there would be with the British Government. As between a

¹¹ Int. rep. 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., f.1, para.1, 926/1822/48655.) The first premier of British Guiana (Guyana) from 1961 to 1964 was Cheddi Jagan, whose Communist-inspired People's Progressive Party had secured a majority in the House of Assembly in 1953, whereupon the Constitution was suspended by the British, the premier and his ministers dismissed, and British forces sent to the territory. In 1954 Jagan was imprisoned for violating an order restricting his movements to Georgetown but in 1955 he was re-elected leader of the party, which was returned to power with a two-thirds majority in 1957. He became minister in an executive over which, however, the British governor of British Guiana now had extensive powers of veto and nomination, until the grant of Independence. Some comparison is possible between the Maltese and Guianan colonial-constitutional experiences between 1933 and 1961, and to some extent between Jagan and Mintoff (who however was never dismissed from office or imprisoned under British rule).

referendum and an election Borg Olivier was not sure which they would prefer.

The important thing was perhaps that the Archbishop did not want an election, Borg Olivier said. The Archbishop now took the line that as Independence must come soon in any case, "he would rather it came now with a Conservative Government in London and a Nationalist Government in Malta" than a little later when there might be a Labour Government in London and possibly an MLP Government in Malta. To this Sandys replied that he would prefer to get Independence through well before May, say by February.¹² Reverting to the question of an election, Sandys thought that this might be covered by a referendum either on a choice between the two constitutions or on specific questions.

In saying he would be prepared to think about a referendum, Borg Olivier was afraid that the small parties might boycott it, and also Mr Mintoff. He himself had got 48% of the votes last time (here he was counting all the preferences received on the final count) but not all even of his own party would vote in a referendum. A great deal would depend on the attitude of the smaller parties. Sandys suggested a referendum could be either on whether the PN or the MLP drafts would be preferable, or more specific questions, of which he handed Borg Olivier a copy, could be asked, as follows:

1. Do you want Malta to be a monarchy?
2. Do you want Malta to apply at once for Commonwealth membership?
3. Do you want the Government to conclude with Britain a treaty for mutual defence, which would allow British troops to remain in Malta?

¹² 'Note of a discussion between the Secretary of State and Dr Borg Olivier', f. 1, 926/1915/48583.

4. Do you want the status and rights of the Catholic Church to remain broadly as at present?
5. Do you want to proceed to Independence without further elections?

If the choice were between the two constitutional projects, answers to all of these questions would have been given, except the one on defence.

Borg Olivier said much depended on the attitude of the Archbishop. If the Archbishop supported the referendum, he thought it would be all right to have one, even if it included a question about an election. It was a pity the Archbishop was going to be in Rome but he must see him. He could perhaps see him on the way back to Malta. He knew that Gonzi had been in touch with Pellegrini indirectly and he knew also that he was "angry with Dr Ganado because he had been in favour of an election."¹³ At the same time, however, Borg Olivier did not seem too keen on sticking to the more stringent passages inserted in the draft constitution in July concerning the position of the church. He thought it might be best "if we reverted to our old position". He said that he "only submitted some of the new proposals" (which were now incorporated in the Command Paper) "in order to balance out some of Mr Mintoff's amendments." He would be quite content with a Constitution following the draft he submitted at the beginning of the conference. He thought that the Archbishop wanted to get the authorities at the Vatican to urge upon the British government, through the British Minister to the Vatican, that "some of Mr Mintoff's amendments should not be accepted."¹⁴

Borg Olivier said that he would be "much happier if there could be a financial agreement first." Sandys repeated that he doubted if it

¹³ *Ibid.*, f. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 2.

would help. He asked how quickly it would be possible to get things moving. On the assumption that the Malta Legislative Assembly would approve a vote for a referendum, Sandys advised that there would be advantage in getting legislation through before the House of Commons reassembled on 24th October. Borg Oliver seemed to think that it should be possible to have a decision on a referendum by then. It would take a full six weeks to organise a referendum after that but he did not see why the result should not be known by the end of November. Sandys said that in that case he did not see any reason why Independence should be put off beyond February.

Borg Olivier insisted that it would help if he could know something about the financial assistance Malta was to receive soon - not necessarily a full financial agreement but "perhaps you could turn loans into soft loans or something of that sort." Interestingly enough, while again changing the subject, Sandys then asked whether Borg Olivier thought there was any chance of Mintoff trying to stage a *coup d'état* after Independence. He understood that some people in Malta were afraid of that. Borg Olivier dismissed the fear; he did not think so.

Finally Sandys sought to warn Dr Borg Olivier that "a time was coming when a decision would have to be taken by the Council of Administration of the Dockyard as to the amount of labour which was surplus to their future requirements." The Dockyard was running at a loss of something like £50,000 a month which "we could not go on bearing indefinitely and a plan would have to be made to run down the labour force." Sandys was not making precise proposals just yet, and of course Borg Olivier, he said, would have to be consulted about any plan but he thought it well "to warn" him that this was in the offing. Borg Olivier replied by saying that he had agreed that there should be no replacement of natural wastage but that "any plan to sack men from the Dockyard" would inevitably make it necessary for him "to resign at once."

Borg Olivier had meant to enquire what was to be the future of the Dockyard after Independence. Back-tracking momentarily, Sandys said he had not given much thought to this yet. One suggestion had

SECRET

Minister of State
Secretary of State

MALTA

It is on the cards that Dr. Borg Olivier might throw his hand in and that no other government could be formed to carry on till a general election. In that event it would be necessary to give the Governor powers to conduct the administration himself.

2. In case this position should arise, a draft Order in Council has over recent months been prepared in consultation with Sir Edward Wakefield. A copy is attached. We understand that the Governor agrees with it, but we are confirming this.

3. The Order would suspend the operation of certain parts of the Constitution, i.e. principally those governing the Executive and legislation. Executive and legislative power would then rest with the Governor. He would have an Executive Council of not less than five members (we are asking him whom he would appoint) and he would have to consult them before acting but he would not have to follow their advice.

4. The Order would also suspend the sections setting up the Commissioner and his office because the Governor would then be acting as the representative of the British Government and it would not seem right technically to provide also for a Commissioner to act in that capacity. We are asking the Governor and Sir Edward what they envisage would happen to the Commissioner and his staff.

5. If Dr. Borg Olivier resigns within the course of the next few days and refuses to carry on pending the appointment of a successor (irresponsible though this would be and inconsistent with the claim that Malta is qualified for independence), we will have to seek approval for the passage of the Order as a matter of urgency. If, while not immediately resigning, he indicates that he is likely to do so in the near future, we may have to arrange for the Order to be passed as a "Dormant Order", so that it can be brought into effect immediately if required. The next ordinary meeting of the Privy Council is on the 26th March.

*In view of the agreement
 reached with Dr. B.O.
 on the next of steps,
 does one want to proceed
 with this? B.S. 14/3*

J.M. Martin

13th March, 1964

L. 13/3.

SECRET

Borg Olivier's resignation threat, mainly over the prospect of mass discharges from the Dockyard, led to initial preparations for a return to emergency rule, as in 1958-59. Lord Lansdowne seemed to agree with Sir John Martin's *mise-en-scène* for such an eventuality. Sandys was wiser and more optimistic, as he had come to an arrangement with Borg Olivier to stave off such drastic action; moreover much would now depend on the outcome of the forthcoming referendum.

been that ownership should pass to the Malta Government who should set up a public corporation which would in fact be the Council of Administration much as at present. Borg Olivier said that he could "not give them a free hand to discharge labour."

In reply to a question, he said that Mr Attard Kingswell seemed quite happy at present about labour relations in the Dockyard but if discharges started "these good relations would break down at once." "We must play together on this", Sandys rejoined. It was most important that any recommendations made by the Council of Administration when they met to consider this subject in Malta towards the end of October "should not become publicly known before they had been considered by the Governments."¹⁵

While in London, the Prime Minister attended and addressed the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council being held there, as planned. In a speech that was widely reported in the Maltese press, Borg Olivier explained what had befallen the Maltese economy due to the changed British defence policy, and made a plea for assistance.

On returning to Malta after an absence of three weeks spent in Italy, the U.S.A. and Britain, Borg Olivier announced that he would be summoning Parliament shortly, where his recent overseas visits, as well as the July conference, were naturally brought up in the light of ongoing developments. A fortnight later he paid another flying visit to London, at the Colonial Secretary's request, to pursue the confidential discussions regarding Malta's path to independence. In the meantime, Borg Olivier had not followed the Colonial Secretary's advice of holding further consultations with the Maltese political parties about the Independence question.

The next meeting between Sandys and Borg Olivier took place on 9th November. The upshot of it was that a timetable was agreed upon containing the steps to be taken between December and the time

¹⁵ 'Note of a discussion, f. 3.



A typical scene at Luqa Airport in the early Sixties as the Prime Minister returns from another session of “the London talks” and addresses the press in the VIP lounge. Above, descending from the British European Airways flight, Dr Borg Olivier is on this occasion accompanied by his wife, Alexandra *née* Mattei. With him in the picture below, from left, are Minister Caruana, Minister Caruana Demajo, Professor Cremona and Dr Ragonesi.



when Malta became independent. It was also agreed that the steps they had decided on should remain confidential. An eleven point *aide memoire* was drawn up, of which Borg Olivier retained the top copy, wherein these steps were outlined, briefly as follows.

On returning to Malta, Borg Olivier would have formal consultations with the other political parties. He would ask them whether they could agree upon the form of the constitution or alternatively upon a procedure for referring the outstanding issues to the Maltese people, through a referendum or elections. Borg Olivier would write to Sandys "within a fortnight" to inform him of the result of his consultations. In the event of there being no agreement either on the form of the constitution or on the procedure for referring the matter to the electors, the prime minister would ask the British government to decide the outstanding issues and to enact the necessary legislation. Borg Olivier would ask Sandys, before reaching decisions, to have further consultations with leaders of the Maltese parties. So pre-planned was the whole thing that this *aide memoire* even included a draft letter, at Annex A, saying exactly that. Assuming the absence of agreement, Sandys would reply to Borg Olivier acceding to his request and proposing that the consultations should take place in London during the first week in December. Another draft letter, now saying that, was attached to the *aide memoire* as Annex B. Borg Olivier and Sandys however had to agree together "the exact texts of the letters to be exchanged". After these consultations with the political leaders, Sandys would announce before Christmas the general lines of the British Government's decision and the date for independence. This was now set for 23rd April 1964. Presumably February was too soon, and May too late. The Malta Independence Bill would be introduced into Parliament as soon as possible after the recess, that is at the end of January.

On defence, the British government would send the text of the proposed defence agreement to Malta within ten days, together with experts who would give any necessary explanations to the Malta government. Outstanding points would be settled by Sandys with Borg Olivier when the latter would go up to London for the constitutional consultations early in December. Sandys would consult with the

Foreign Secretary with a view to taking whatever steps were best “to ensure the retention of the NATO Headquarters in Malta.” On finance, the British government would discuss financial arrangements as soon as Borg Olivier was ready to do so. These financial talks would be conducted confidentially and without publicity.¹⁶

This scenario, more or less as set, would duly unravel as the weeks ticked by. It was like a dress rehearsal for performance night. Quickly cutting out all the tautological waffle, it made it snappy, as the loitering sailors used to say.

On his return to Malta, Borg Olivier revealed little of what had passed between him and Sandys, but the Maltese public and the party leaders, particularly Mintoﬀ, concluded that the Prime Minister had been hustled by the Colonial Secretary into some form of agreement, in accordance with the British desire to impose independence on Malta as soon as possible. Quickly the impression spread that they had reached an understanding that Sandys would probably have to arbitrate about the Constitution; and the Opposition party leaders each made clear that such arbitration was unacceptable.¹⁷

When asked in the Commons on 19th November by Mr Awbery what progress had been made in his discussions with Borg Olivier on the arrangements for Malta’s independence, Sandys replied tersely that the Prime Minister of Malta had gone to London “for a confidential

¹⁶ Gilmore/Eastwood, 11 Nov. 1963, conf., comprising encs., annexes, 926/1915/48583. Borg Olivier wished NATO to retain its Headquarters in Floriana. This conformed to his pro-West position and it would be reassuring to all those afraid of taking the leap to independence NATO employed some Maltese workers, and attracted ships to the harbours; it also sponsored a prize-winning annual essay writing competition about itself in Maltese secondary schools. On the vitally important question of security, and Malta’s would-be relationship with NATO, see esp. II, 15.

¹⁷ Int. rep. 6 Nov.-5 Dec. 1963, sec., f. 1, para. 2, 926/1822/48655.

discussion" with him ten days ago, and he had no statement to make at present. When asked by Mr Wall on 26th November if he would announce long-term plans for the financial assistance of Malta "prior to any discussions on the independence constitution" for the island, Sandys again replied in one sentence: "I agreed with the Prime Minister of Malta during his recent visit to London to discuss financial assistance as early as practicable." He was a little more expansive when asked by Mr Biggs-Davison on 3rd December about emigration to Australia, saying Her Majesty's Government had agreed to increase to £300,000 the assistance they had offered for this purpose out of their general financial aid to Malta, as he had already told Mr Wall in reply to a P.Q. during an earlier sitting on 14th May.

In November 1963 Borg Olivier finally held discussions with the other party leaders to try to narrow the differences between them over the Constitution. Mintoff was more uncompromising than ever over human rights and the church. Ganado, Pellegrini and Strickland likewise refused to budge from the positions which they had taken up in London in July. As soon as he had finished these discussions, such as they were, Borg Olivier informed Sandys that he had not been able to obtain any agreement between the parties. In these circumstances it appeared only reasonable to refer the outstanding issues for decision to him (Sandys). Borg Olivier asked Sandys that before taking decisions he should himself hold discussions with the other political leaders. On 29th November, Wakefield, on behalf of Sandys, issued invitations in these terms to Borg Olivier, Mintoff, Ganado, Pellegrini and Strickland to "come to London" for discussions beginning on 3rd December.¹⁸

It seems there could be no departure from the set script, no *ad libbing*. When on 30th November Pellegrini moved the adjournment to discuss a matter of urgent public importance (that being

¹⁸ For this and what follows, see esp. Int. rep., 6 Nov.-5 Dec. 1963, sec., f. 2, para. 5, 926/1822/48655.



Above: Dr Herbert Ganado, Leader of the Democratic Nationalist Party, being interviewed by Harold Scorey of Rediffusion outside the Auberge d'Aragon following constitutional 'consultations' with the Government. Behind him (from left) are Miss Strickland, Dr Daniel Micallef and Mr Pellegrini of the Christian Workers Party, and Dr Albert Ganado (DNP).

Below: the discussions in progress in the office of the Prime Minister at the Auberge d'Aragon. Dr Ċensu Tabone, the new PN general secretary, is third from left.





A former PN general secretary and since 1962 the prime minister's public relations secretary, Dr Victor Ragonese was Borg Olivier's right-hand man throughout the Independence negotiations, sometimes conveying messages or conducting inquiries.

Wakefield's letter asking them to proceed, almost immediately, to London for further discussions), Borg Olivier opposed, on the grounds that the positions of the parties were well known and that further discussion in the Assembly was inopportune. As if that were not reason enough, the Speaker (Paolo Pace) invoked Erskine May to rule that the invitations, coming as they did from the Colonial Secretary, were not within the "administrative responsibility" of the Maltese Government, and that therefore Pellegrini's motion could not be accepted. This provoked a row, and the Opposition MPs walked out.

However, all the party leaders accepted the invitation to proceed to London for more talks about the same things. Mintoff expressed private doubts about whether his talks with the Colonial Secretary would yield any results, but he was believed to feel that a trip to London would be worthwhile for meeting British Labour leaders, the British press, and perhaps also for revisiting the Soviet embassy in London, as he was alleged to have done for the first time in July 1963. While the minor party leaders insisted that the issue of independence be put to a referendum or an election, Mintoff repeated that Britain must quit Malta at 31 May and that if human

rights were not secured the UN would have to take over until these were. Believing that Sandys was determined to have his way and take Borg Olivier with him, Mintoff said that his party would not be bound by any decision reached by Sandys. As evidence that Sandys could not be trusted, he referred to his treatment of Dr Jagan. If anyone should arbitrate, the MLP held, that should be the UN "until liberty, equality and true democracy reign in the country." Mintoff was in no mood to be conciliatory. To make matters worse, while Gonzi was in Rome, a Mrs Zammit, a minor MLP official, was killed by a car and refused Christian burial. The MLP made much of this, and Borg Olivier was known to have been privately disturbed by the church's attitude.¹⁹

As foreseen, a second round of December talks took place from the 3rd to the 6th December - in the first week of the month, right according to schedule. The first 'December talks' had been those between Borg Olivier and Sandys in 1962, after the demand for independence had been lodged the previous August. This time, a year later, Borg Olivier was accompanied by the other party leaders, as had happened already only five months earlier. There was thus a sense of *déjà vu*.

The C.O. staff and advisers had done a lot of spade work, comparing and sorting out all that had been said and suggested during the Malta Independence Conference in July. In examining the amendments proposed by all sides, especially but not only those by the two leading parties, they listed where disagreements existed, and gave their considered opinions as to what would be acceptable or not to the Maltese and British governments and to the British Parliament. They marked out, irrespective of party, which of these amendments seemed the more reasonable and acceptable, and which not. In this way they hoped to be in a better position to pin and narrow down some of the differences, and perhaps to reach a modicum of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 3, para, 7, para. 9. Mrs Eliza Zammit was the secretary of the Gzira committee of the Labour Women's Section.

compromise on some of the points, the most troublesome of which still concerned the position and power of the church, or what Mintoff liked to call by a catchy tune "human rights".

Arguing meticulously on a clause by clause basis, they gave a special designation - "R" - to signify a point of religious significance. The "R" clauses comprised sections 4 f (iv), 4 l, 24 (5) and (6), 28 (4) A and 28 (7), (9) and (10), as well as 37 A. The section 25 (3) and (4) must not have been marked "R" through an oversight, because this concerned public meetings and the reasons why freedom of public assembly could be curtailed, such as public order - or a pre-advised religious gathering. Mintoff wanted to spell this out in more detail. On this, the C.O. advisers held that Mintoff's wording was not acceptable to Borg Olivier, "nor was it reasonable". Ganado had "a much better draft" and Borg Olivier "might be able to accept something on these lines."²⁰

The other sections and sub-clauses related essentially to the MLP's so-called six points, to which the Maltese church was adamantly opposed. In the opinion of the C.O. advisers, it would not be appropriate for the Constitution to say simply that a law would provide for civil marriage, not could it provide for such a law in any detail. The present position was that all marriage was governed by the Canon Law. This covered not only all born Catholics but also all others married in a church of their choosing. There was no provision for divorce for anyone. There was no provision for civil marriage for atheists. The result was that "interdicted Catholics who are banned from the sacraments cannot get married",²¹ but, it was noted:

We shall certainly get nowhere by trying to alter the present provision for Catholics or by trying to introduce provision for divorce. It is an apparent gap that there is no provision for civil marriage for atheists but there is really no demand

²⁰ See above, I, 7.

²¹ In practice they somehow could - in a sacrasty.



The burial in the early Sixties of “interdicted” MLP supporters on unconsecrated ground in a section of the Addolorata cemetery known colloquially as the “*mizbla*” (rubbish dump) was a rallying point for Mintoff’s party. Here, after a corteo led by MLP officials, Labour Brigade children stand to attention by graves strewn with flowers.



for this. The real solution is a reconciliation between Mintoff and his party and the Church.²²

No action was recommended on this point.

On the question that children of parents who objected, to be exempt from religious teaching in schools, it was felt that that this would not be unreasonable and it could go into the Constitution. However, it was likely to be strongly opposed by the Prime Minister. It was "probably a point of secondary importance with Mintoff and not worth pushing the P.M. very hard on it."

The next section concerned broadcasting. Mintoff wanted "broadcasting on religious questions to be allowed" provided there was no "resort to vilification" and that there would be a right of reply even if it offended "religious sentiment". This was not considered suitable for a Constitution. The real solution really would be "an impartial Broadcasting Authority" and "a more reasonable attitude" on the part of the church and the MLP. It was thought possible that the P.M. could be "induced to make some constructive proposal" regarding the Broadcasting Authority, for example that the Leader of the Opposition should have the right to appoint one member.

There were then the provisions in section 28, starting with Mintoff's expectation that "public morality, decency and public order" be interpreted "according to the principles generally accepted in Western European democracies" and not according to the standards of morality or decency upheld by one particular creed. In British eyes, it would be "perfectly practicable to draft something on these lines", that is the Western European democratic principles. It would of course still be for Maltese judges to interpret such a clause but "it would mean much to Mintoff (and to opinion in Parliament here)".

²² 'More serious points of difference between Nationalist and MLP Parties', f.1, enc. 926/1915/48583.

The P.M. "would not be on strong grounds for refusing. He might be told that we think it very desirable to include such a provision."²³

Another clause in this section proposed that all existing laws should be held not inconsistent with the fundamental rights provisions. Mintoff wanted the exemption limited to laws to be specified in a schedule. Professor J. J. Cremona argued that it would be "a major task to draw up a schedule but we think Mintoff is right and that omnibus exemption could defeat much of the object of the fundamental rights provisions." It was reckoned that Dr Borg Olivier "could probably be induced to agree."

There were then, in the draft as it now was, sub-sections 9 and 10 of section 28, whereby the Maltese Government was proposing that things done by the Catholic Church in the exercise of her spiritual powers or anything done for the protection of religion should not be inconsistent with the fundamental rights provisions. The MLP wanted these clauses deleted. The C.O. officials, including Christopher Eastwood, thought the Government's draft "quite unreasonable". They could "hardly believe" that the P.M. had put it forward "very seriously." It was suggested Borg Olivier be told that "we could not agree to their inclusion".

In section 37 A, Mintoff wanted to have a provision "on undue influence in elections on the lines of s. 101 of our Representation of the People Act." The departmental view was that it would be "unusual" to put this in the Constitution but "perfectly practicable" to do so. Since 1924 Malta had had a legislative provision very similar to the British one but which used the phrase "material or moral injury" in place of "temporal or spiritual injury":

We made no comment when this law was passed and it could be argued we should not change the phrase now. But there

²³ *Ibid.*, f. 2.

is no doubt the Church did after the last election impose spiritual injuries on those who voted for the M.L.P. The point is of importance. It was raised by Mr Harold Wilson in the House. There is much to be said for doing what Mintoff wants and P.M. might be so informed.²⁴

It is odd that the Department should here have been stating incorrectly, and underlining the fact, that it was after the last election, i.e. after 1962, that the Church had imposed spiritual injuries on the MLP, when the general interdict had in fact been imposed in 1961, *before* the last election. What could be meant here perhaps is that these sanctions were continuing, and they could thus influence voters' choices in forthcoming ballots, unless they were rendered unconstitutional and therefore illegal. On this point, however, the social, moral, cultural, religious, ecclesiastical and political textures of the constituencies being addressed by Wilson and by Borg Olivier could hardly have been more different. Simply stated, in one the Church belonged to England whereas in the other Malta belonged to the Church. No politician worth his salt in so staunchly Catholic a Southern European and Mediterranean island as Malta, with an energetic archbishop and three other political parties breathing down his neck, would gamble his own survival, on the eve of Independence, to deny the Catholic Church the right to exercise spiritual sanction over her faithful - whatever Mr Harold Wilson (or a boat load of British civil servants) may have thought about it.

Other serious and still unresolved points of difference were these. On emergencies - and the Maltese parliament had updated some legislation on this already - Mintoff wanted the parliamentary majority necessary to declare or confirm them to be $\frac{4}{5}$ ths instead of $\frac{2}{3}$ rds. This was because he thought that the rest of the legislature could declare an emergency against the MLP and then he and others might be detained. But $\frac{2}{3}$ rds (s. 28 (2) and (3)) seemed reasonable. Actions by the MLP "might well be what caused the emergency."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 3.

On electoral commissioners, the Government wanted these appointed by the Head of State on the advice of the Prime Minister after consulting the Leader of the Opposition. The MLP wanted it to be on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, disputes to be settled by the Constitutional Court. They also wanted these provisions to cover assistants as well as commissioners. On appointments to the main Commission there was some sympathy with Mintoff but the matter was fully argued at the conference and perhaps "we should let" the Government draft stand.

There was then the question as to whether Malta should have a Governor-General or a President (sections 29 to 31), and provisions made for the Queen (s. 32). There was also a difference of opinion as to the extent and manner of proportionality in the electoral system (sections 33 and 37), but the Government draft seemed acceptable as it was.

Other differences concerned the method of amending the Constitution. The Government wanted three methods: (1) a bare majority of all Members, (2) $\frac{2}{3}$ rds, and (3) referendum after $\frac{2}{3}$ rds vote. The MLP wanted only two methods: (1) bare majority, and (2) $\frac{4}{5}$ ths. The C.O. internally was proposing two methods: (1) $\frac{2}{3}$ rds, and (2) referendum after $\frac{2}{3}$ rds. Borg Olivier resisted their proposal that amendments to the fundamental rights should require a referendum. Mintoff did not believe a referendum useful.

Section 83 provided for appeals to the Privy Council. Mintoff wanted this omitted. The C.O. position was: leave it but not entrench it deeply.²⁵

²⁵ The question was raised as to whether Malta could be entitled to have a judge sitting on the Privy Council, but the suggestion was dismissed on grounds of size and calibre, and as impractical. However, a lecture given about Malta and the Privy Council by the Professor of Civil Law at the Royal University of Malta, Professor J. M. Ganado, just at this juncture, attracted the attention of the C.O., enc. 926/1915.

On s. 100 A, Mintoff wanted a general election to be held under his proposed new electoral provisions before the rest of the Constitution came into force. This was a major point, but they had no comment at this stage. On s. 100 B, Mintoff wanted all Crown and Services land to revert to the Malta Government. This aspect would be covered by the Defence Agreement in due course.²⁶

During this round of all-party talks much of the argument was political rather than constitutional as such. Mintoff insisted that he wanted “fair” elections, that is elections held under the Constitution as amended in accordance with MLP demands at the July conference. Pellegrini and Ganado sided with Mintoff to the extent of demanding elections before independence, but did not support his demands as to the conditions under which such elections would be held. Strickland asked for a referendum on the question of ‘independence now’, to be followed by elections if the majority of the Maltese wished for early independence.²⁷

In his memoirs, Ganado recounted in some detail what happened, but relished in particular the common front taken by the parties for early elections, which apparently took Borg Olivier by surprise. Sandys therefore asked them, one by one, whether they wanted elections under the 1961 Constitution or under that which Mintoff was proposing. It was, Ganado observed, “a trap with Borg Olivierian cheese”.²⁸ They asked first that Sandys declare that there would be fresh elections, then they would answer his question. They also objected to Governor Dorman’s participation in the talks as he was seen to be taking the Government’s side. They did not see why he should be participating in a political conference and he had to withdraw. One of their suggestions was that the independence

²⁶ ‘More serious points of difference...’, *op.cit.*, f. 4.

²⁷ Int., rep. 6 Dec.-6 Jan. 1964, sec., f. 1-2, para. 1-4, 196/1822/48655.

²⁸ “In-nassa kienet b’gobna Borg Oliverjana.” Herbert Ganado, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 402.

question be postponed until after the next elections in 1966, which would be contested on that platform. Borg Olivier knew, Ganado recalled, that by 1966 the MLP would not have recovered the thousands of votes it had lost, but he still refused to accept this suggestion because a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. Before leaving London, Mintoff, Ganado and Pellegrini (but not Strickland) together asked Sandys to commit himself to fresh elections before the conference would continue discussing what form an independence constitution would take. It was immediately after this - on 6th December - that Borg Olivier wrote to Sandys and officially proposed that a referendum be now held.²⁹

Reference to these encounters and exchanges was made in the House of Commons a few days later. In the sitting of Tuesday, 10th December 1963, Mr Nigel Fisher, Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and for the Colonies, answered several related questions by Mr Hector Hughes, Mr Stonehouse, Mr Sorensen, Mr Wall, Captain Litchfield and Mr Awbery. He also made reference to a statement by Mr Sandys made on the morning of the 6th December, in the course of which he had read out a letter from Dr Borg Olivier to him bearing the same date. In his statement Sandys said that since the British Government had definitely decided that Malta was to become independent by not later than 31st May next, the final form of the Constitution had to be settled without further delay:

In the light of the views expressed to me by all political parties, I have reluctantly reached the conclusion that there is no likelihood that the differences which exist between them on important constitutional questions will be resolved by further discussion. In these circumstances there remain only two courses open. The first is for the issues to be referred to the people of Malta, either through a referendum or through elections. The second is for the British Government to proceed to take the necessary decisions on their own authority...

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 406-407. Little did Ganado know that had been the plan all along.

In his letter Borg Olivier referred to the decision that Malta should become independent by 31st May and to the Colonial Secretary's invitation to him that he hold discussions in Malta with representatives of all political parties, in an endeavour to agree upon joint constitutional proposals:

The further talks in Malta and in London have shown conclusively that the parties cannot agree on the constitutional arrangements for Independence. However, there is general agreement that an imposed solution should, if possible, be avoided. I consider therefore that before accepting this necessity, we should all make a further effort to agree on some procedure by which the people of Malta could be directly consulted on the matters at issue.

The two main questions on which there was disagreement were:

1. whether there should be new elections before Independence; and
2. what should be the form of Malta's future Constitution.

In order to give the people an opportunity to express their opinion on these two precise questions, Borg Olivier continued, "I propose that a referendum should be held..."³⁰

In a summing up of these December talks by one London paper just before they ended, it was reported that the differences between the Maltese parties, and particularly between Dr Borg Olivier, the Prime Minister, and Mr Dom Mintoff, the Labour Party leader, "are now regarded as too great for negotiation." The paper mentioned the question of early elections and Commonwealth membership:

But the biggest stumbling block is the position of the Roman Catholic Church and its alleged intervention against Mr

³⁰ Hansard, Commons, 10 Dec. 1963, esp. cols. 189-190.

Mintoff's Labour Party. It is hoped that Mr Sandys will be able to draft a series of safeguards in the constitution which will set Labour fears at rest on this score. In any event this week's discussions are likely to be final.

A draft constitution was expected to be produced either before Mr Sandys' departure for the Kenya and Zanzibar independence celebrations that weekend, or shortly after his return.³¹

Some colour was lent to the talks by Mabel Strickland who produced a petition for a referendum signed by 4, 163 electors. "What is also very important", she wrote in the letter covering it, "is that among the signatures are members of the MLP and of the NP, even some very prominent Nationalists connected with the party executive." She also enclosed a request by a former M.P. for Gozo "who has come specially to London to ask me that if it turns out that Malta is to be sacrificed, to do my best to save Gozo from the folly of Independence."

The Gozitan plea was from two brothers, Paul and John Portelli (known locally by the family nickname 'tal-Lingi'). Describing themselves as "leading citizens of the Island of Gozo and a former Member of the Legislative Assembly",³² they had "come specially to London" to ask Miss Strickland that should Britain insist in granting independence to Malta she was to demand on their behalf "and on behalf of the majority of the people of Gozo" that

Independence be not imposed on them, they do not wish to give up their security which Independence would imperil, but demand that they keep the Union Jack and all that it implies flying over the Island of Gozo.

³¹ See 'Arbitration on Constitution for Malta' by the Foreign Staff of *The Financial Times*, 5 Dec. 1963, enc. W095/2764.

³² Paul Portelli, a businessman, had been returned in the 1950 election for the Democratic Action Party led by Prof. J. Hyzler.

Dated 5th December 1963, the letter was addressed to Sandys and written in ink on a letter-head of the Lansdowne Club in Berkeley Square, W. 1, one of Mabel's favourite haunts.³³

³³ Enc., 5 Dec., 1963, Strickland/Sandys, 5 Dec. 1963, *et al*, 926/1919. The letter and petitions were acknowledged by Sandys' private secretary, N.B.J. Huijsman, to which was added in his hand this note: "As you will see from the dateline, we are occupied with our Cyprus crisis!" Huijsman/Strickland, 26 Dec. 1963, 926/1919.

A Referendum Strategy

THE CONSTITUTION OR INDEPENDENCE?

When Dr Borg Olivier wrote to Mr Sandys in December 1963 offering to hold a referendum, it may have seemed as if an acceptable way out of the *impasse* had finally been found. In proposing a referendum, the Maltese Government was at the same time asking for a stay of judgment on the part of the British, subject to the result of this popular consultation. Any resolution of the difficulties encountered in the negotiations would be put into abeyance, pending the result. In conceding to hold a referendum, the Borg Olivier administration was bowing to pressure from the opposition parties, and the British Government. At the same time, they were avoiding to go back to the people in an early general election.

A referendum too could be risky, however. While Independence had figured in the electoral programmes of the two main parties, the 1962 general elections had not been fought primarily, much less solely, on the Independence issue. What a majority of the Maltese electorate actually felt or thought about the prospect of immediate Independence in the new circumstances, was really unknown.

Some of the newly independent states were already in turbulence. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, a pan-African nationalist pioneer, had established a neutralist one party dictatorship, arresting his main political opponents by October 1961. In Zanzibar, where the constitutional adviser in 1960 had been Sir Hilary Blood, there was bloody racial rioting as the Zanzibar Nationalist Party led by Ali Muhsin, a Nasserite, consolidated its position. In Cyprus the independence constitution barely lasted three years: it went haywire in December 1962. There was murderous ethnic fighting in 1963 with the threat of a Graeco-Turkish war looming over it. Malta had no racial problem, and she could only be said to have had a religious one in so far as secular pressure was beginning to make itself felt in a tension with traditional attitudes in what was ultimately a power struggle. But Malta had not been a sovereign state either; its political ups and downs had been largely within the ambit of a colonial tutelage which, for better or for worse, had come to have a ring of familiarity if not reassurance about it. And then there was Mintoff as an *éminence grise*.

Since July 1963 the Malta Independence negotiations had been conducted on the premise that the main parties wanted early Independence, even as they disagreed on what form it should take. In December 1963, two questions for a referendum had been mentioned by Borg Olivier - fresh elections and the Independence constitution. After the exchanges which Borg Olivier had with the party leaders in December and January - as well as other encounters which Sandys had in London with Borg Olivier and, on one occasion, even with Gonzi, these were reduced by the Maltese side to one question. That question would simply ask whether the voters approved of the Independence constitution being proposed by the Malta government or not.

When Borg Olivier had been unable to obtain the concurrence of the party leaders to the questions he proposed - Mintoff insisting on one of the questions but not the other, and the smaller parties demanding a different question or otherwise expressing reservations - Borg Olivier referred back to Sandys on 21st January 1964, again saying that no agreement was possible and asking the British

Government to decide. On 21st January 1964 Borg Olivier also published the texts of the letters he had sent to the party leaders. None of the parties, he said, had wholly accepted the form of the referendum that he had proposed. Consequently he had no choice but to refer matters to the British Government, asking that the Secretary of State take the responsibility of settling the form of Malta's Independence constitution. He did suggest that before doing this he (Sandys) should ask the Opposition leaders whether they had any further submissions to make on the draft constitution.¹

Sandys was ready to meet the party leaders for a third time in conference in February, in spite of the pressing colonial problems in East Africa. Mintoff, after seeing him, assumed that some of the MLP amendments would be accepted, probably because Sandys may have confided to him that he personally thought they should be.

All the political leaders visited London for discussions with Sandys in February. Borg Olivier and Mintoff each went twice, in the middle and at the end of February, in the attempt to devise a compromise. Borg Olivier said very little, but Mintoff felt there was something of a "thaw" in relations between the British Government and the MLP. A news item in *The Sunday Telegraph* hinted that Sandys was attempting to curb the power of the church, provoking renewed appeals and petitions against any curbs on the freedom of the church.²

Fortified by assumptions that he was making headway, Mintoff petitioned Khrushchev, Lyndon Johnson, and U Thant.³ He

¹ Borg Olivier/Sandys, 6 Dec. 1963; Sandys statement, 6 Dec. 1963, Hansard, Commons, 10 Dec. 1963, cols. 187-192.

² Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., f.1, para.3, 926/1822/48655. See below, I, 10.

³ See below, II, 14.

COPY

TELEGRAM

9 FEBRUARY 1964

URGENT

SIR ALEC DOUGLAS HOME, PRIME MINISTER AND
 RT. HON. R.A. BUTLER
 C/O THE COMMANDANT, LONDON AIRPORT, LONDON.

THE UNDERSIGNED RESPECTFULLY DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO UNNECESSARY
 DUPLICATION OF CYPRUS POSITION IN MALTA IF INDEPENDENCE IS
 PREMATURELY GRANTED STOP NATO AND UNO WOULD THEN BE INVOLVED IN
 ISLAND'S SECURITY THROUGH COLD WAR TACTICS STOP KRUSCHEV'S
 INTERVENTION IN CYPRUS INDEPENDENT COMMONWEALTH ISLAND IS
 MIRRORRED BY MINTOFF'S TELEGRAM DATED FEBRUARY 5 TO KRUSCHEV
 JOHNSON AND U. THANT STOP THIS FOLLOWED MINTOFF'S RECENT VISIT TO
 ISRAEL AND HIS WELL-KNOWN CONTACTS WITH RUSSIAN EMBASSIES AND
 AFRO-ASIANS STOP HIS TELEGRAM REQUESTED ADDRESSEES INTERVENTION
 IN MALTA ON INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION STOP RESPONSIBLE AND
 MODERATE MALTESE SUPPORTING BRITAIN AND THE WEST CLAIM REFERENDUM
 ON THE SINGLE ISSUE OF INDEPENDENCE ALONE OR AN ELECTION IS
 THEIR INALIENABLE RIGHT BEFORE SUCH AN IRREVOCABLE STEP AS
 INDEPENDENCE BEING IMPOSED IS TAKEN STOP

TONI PELLEGRINI, LEADER CHRISTIAN WORKERS PARTY

HERBERT GANADO, LEADER DEMOCRATIC NATIONALIST PARTY

MABEL STRICKLAND, LEADER PROGRESSIVE CONSTITUTIONAL PARTY

OFFICE OF THE CENTRAL PARTIES, FLAT 1, NUMBER 8 BRITANNIA STREET,
 VALETTA, MALTA.

A copy of the telegram sent to Douglas-Home and R.A. Butler by the leaders of the three 'centre' parties expressing their fears of Independence and requesting a straight question in an Independence referendum, or fresh elections.

implored the UN to stop Britain from handing Malta over to a priests-ridden government, as he liked to call it. The smaller parties, on their part, telegraphed Sir Alec Douglas-Home and Mr R. A. Butler, the Foreign Secretary, insisting on a straight referendum question about independence: now or not.⁴

⁴ Enc., 926/1871/48489; see above.

CENTRAL 25742

VILLA PARIONE
MALTA

10th February, 1964.

Rt. Hon. Duncan Sandys, M.P.,
Secretary of State for
Commonwealth Relations and for
the Colonies,
Commonwealth Relations Office,
Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

Dear Mr Sandys

You will have received the text of the enclosed telegram via the Acting High Commissioner which I hastened to send you.

The present position here is heading for chaos and collapse. Why pursue it?

Cyprus has shown the Russian hand of infiltration and interference. It has also demonstrated the overriding lessons of history.

I know you must be, as we are, apprehensive of the position in Malta.

It is now not a question of re-entering Malta legally or illegally with the help of the American Sixth Fleet but of staying here "on the will of the people". Moreover, thinking Maltese see the similarity of the pattern here, duplicating the Cyprus situation. This pattern unfolding in the Mediterranean with Khrushchev's intervention in the Cyprus situation has been copied by Mintoff's request for Khrushchev's intervention in Malta's constitution to curb "the priest-ridden country". The "Sunday Telegraph" announcement of the 9th February headed "Malta curb on the Church" is an item of news that undermines all confidence in Britain in the popular mind. It is exactly as Mintoff wants to play it - to weaken the morale of the Church and of law and order which the discipline of the Church has done so much to maintain.

offensive message to Sir Alec Home accusing him of using the Cyprus situation as an excuse to get back to Cyprus with Mintoff's repeated suggestion that Nato's presence in Malta is a threat to Maltese existence.

I enclose you a note on the political situation as I see it.

*I wonder how you
manage the pressures
on your time. An Independent
Malta cannot survive.*

Yr. sincerely
Mabel Strickland

Miss Strickland's letter to Mr Sandys dated 10th February 1964 ending with the handwritten sentence: "An Independent Malta cannot survive."

Mintoff was "in fairly regular communication with Mr Harold Wilson". Through Labour and trade union contacts in Britain he was pressing for human rights provisions to be brought into effect *before* the referendum took place. Until Sandys received Borg Olivier's letter in late January it was still not sure whether there would be fresh elections or a referendum or neither, and which constitutional draft would be adopted. Lord Lansdowne told Mr George Thomson, M.P., and Mr Cunningham of Transport House, who went to see him together about Malta in early January, that "it was by no means clear that there would be a referendum."⁵ In January also, Pellegrini saw Lansdowne in London, claiming that fresh elections would reduce the P.N. and the M.L.P. representation in parliament, putting himself into a position to hold the ring and thus insist on the dropping of independence.⁶

As rumours that the British were giving in to Mintoff's demands began to run rife, the Diocesan Commission quickly went into action, summoning a large popular assembly on 16 February, during which a gathering of some 15,000 people resolved to remind the British Government of its promises to Malta in 1802. On 19 February, when asked in parliament whether he was prepared to accept any compromise on the church's status, Borg Olivier would not give a straight answer, saying the question was hypothetical.⁷

Borg Olivier's position, as he had told Sandys, was not so rigid on the two most objectionable clauses, inserted to counter Mintoff's amendments. He also knew what the British position was. He could not therefore just dismiss any compromise formula. This made matters worse on the church front: the church organisations took the issue to the streets with more rallies and assemblies in March.

⁵ Eastwood min., 8 Jan. 1964, 926/1817/48655.

⁶ Int. rep., 6 Jan.-7 Feb. 1964, sec., 926/1822/48655, f. 1, para. 2.

⁷ Dobie, *op.cit.*, p. 244; *Times of Malta*, 7, 13-15 Feb. 1964; Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 4-5, 926/1822/48655. See below I, 10.

Thousands of people attended these popular manifestations, armed with placards and banners, chanting and praying.

Borg Olivier went up to London for confidential talks with Sandys on 7th February and again on 23rd February 1964. In between, at the Colonial Secretary's invitation, Archbishop Gonzi also went to London for talks on 20th February. Although other issues were continuing to be discussed in these and other meetings being held fairly intensely by now - particularly about defence, security and finance - Sandys was using these discussions to try and devise a compromise which would respect tradition and progress. Sandys pressed hard for such a compromise and seemed prepared to put Independence itself into jeopardy. He indicated to Borg Olivier and Mintoff during his mid-February meetings with them that his own preference would be to make a draft constitution the subject of a referendum in the form: 'Do you want independence now, with this Constitution, or do you want Independence postponed?' There was no objection to British observers being present during the referendum. However, to suggest, as Sandys did at this stage, that the draft constitution would contain a proviso that there should be elections within six months after Independence, was a different matter altogether.⁸

What was behind such a proposal? Was this a bargaining chip? Was it to make independence conditional on elections and thereby more palatable to the MLP, or at least to their supporters in the House of Commons? Or was it to delay things, perhaps in view of the now deteriorating political and security situation in the Mediterranean? Mintoff assumed that his threats of violence had had a good effect and were forcing the colonial secretary's hand on the human rights question. Borg Olivier, on the other hand, was bitterly resentful: he regarded the position now advocated by Sandys as "a betrayal". He insisted that the Secretary of State should give Malta a constitution largely identical to that suggested by the Nationalist Government,

⁸ Int.rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 6., 926/1822/48655.

CONFIDENTIAL

4

THE UNITED KINGDOM COMMISSIONER

7. St. Anne Street
Floriana
Malta G.C.
Tel. Central 21285

Your Reference
S. at ref. 432/62.

13th January, 1964.

My dear Sir

You may be interested in the enclosed note which I made after a talk with Mabel Strickland yesterday. As you know, a "talk" is not quite the right word to use to describe a meeting with Mabel. Yesterday, she telephoned early in the morning to say that she very much wanted to see me. I asked her to the house at noon. She arrived in a state of great excitement about Zanzibar and Cyprus. She had one of her nieces with her, and left this girl in the drawingroom with Susie. Mabel herself, accepting a swig of neat brandy, shoved me off into the diningroom and then into the kitchen where she sat down and held forth for three-quarters of an hour.

2. She does intend, unless she has changed her mind, to leave for London tomorrow, 14th, and then to move in a mysterious way to influence backbenchers and Ministers during the Defence debate.

*Yours ever
Ian*

(Ian Watt)

J. M. Kisch, Esq.,
Colonial Office,
Great Smith Street,
S.W.1.

Male chauvinism apart, Mabel Strickland's entreaties tended to be seen as unduly righteous and alarmist, yet she persisted regardless. On this occasion (when Cyprus was in turmoil) she quoted Sandys as having once said that "with the Cyprus base secure Britain could let Malta go..."

and should stick to the Independence date of 31st May. Unless the colonial secretary did this, the Prime Minister said he was prepared to resign and side with Mintoff in making trouble. Although Borg Olivier did not take the Cabinet into his confidence on this threat until he was due to meet Sandys a second time later on in the month, they supported him when he did.⁹

This was at least the second time that Borg Olivier was having recourse to the resignation threat as a political weapon, the first time having been in connection with large-scale dockyard discharges without consultation. It was a powerful weapon because while the British were keen to satisfy Mintoff and themselves on the secular content of the constitution, they were reluctant to do business on Malta with him in the driving seat on just about anything else.

When Sandys told the leaders of the small parties about his proposal, they were very pleased.¹⁰ That was the sort of referendum question they wanted, and in that case, elections six months after independence would not have been so bad either. They were confident that a straight 'yes' or 'no' to immediate independence would have tilted the balance in their favour. They would then have faced the electorate with a track record of success. In fact they still had no guarantee whatsoever of success, first of all because the PN was a far better established party than any of them, and also because a postponement of Independence could have been seen as simply increasing Mintoff's chances to be the one to get it in due course, with whatever that would have entailed.

Before seeing Borg Olivier and Mintoff the second time, Sandys invited Gonzi to visit London. This visit was widely regarded by most Maltese as the supreme attempt by the people's spiritual head to avert danger. Extremist church supporters reminded themselves that Sandys was not only a Protestant, but a Freemason, and a man

⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 8.



who had been in the divorce court.¹¹ He was not somebody to be entrusted with the task of imposing a constitution on Malta - and the Prime Minister should have known better than to surrender this responsibility into such hands. When it became known that the Archbishop had had two long meetings with the colonial secretary, and an audience with the Queen, public respect and admiration for his activities was intensified. On his return to Malta, the church turned his arrival into "the largest public demonstration since the 1962 elections." The Archbishop, who was unusually demagogic, stigmatised Mintoff as "an apostate". He had told Sandys that if the constitution contained any intrusions in the exercise of the church's spiritual jurisdiction, then he, the clergy and the vast majority of Maltese would firmly resist it.¹²

Sandys held further meetings with all the Maltese party leaders in London between the 24th and the 28th February. On their return to Malta all the Opposition party leaders indicated that they felt that the Secretary of State was making some attempt to meet their points of view. Mintoff repeated his earlier statement that relations between the British government and the M.L.P. were improving. Borg Olivier, choosing his words with care, gave a broad hint that he would not stay in office if the colonial secretary forced a referendum on unacceptable terms. Borg Olivier had recourse to his resignation strategy once more.¹³

Borg Olivier went up to London again on 12th March. The outcome of these talks became clear on the 16th. In a joint statement, Dr Borg Olivier proposed to present the draft of a constitution to the Malta Legislative Assembly and, after endorsement by the Assembly, to

¹¹ Sandys twice married divorcees: Diana Bailey née Churchill, ex-wife of a South African millionaire, in 1935 (divorced in 1960), and Marie Claire Hudson née Schmidt, a Parisian, in 1962. Diana, a heavy drinker, died in 1963. See above I, 6.

¹² Int. rep., 7 Feb. - 6 Mar. 1964, sec. 1, para. 10, 926/1822/48655.

¹³ *Ibid.*, para. 11.

submit it to the electors through a referendum in which they would be asked the question: 'Do you approve of the proposed Constitution for Independence?' Mr Sandys stated that, provided such a referendum be held under fair and free conditions, the British Government, with whom the ultimate responsibility rested, would, in deciding the form of Malta's constitution, endeavour to be guided by the wishes of the people as expressed through their vote in the referendum.¹⁴

The operative phrase in this joint declaration of 16th March, from the British point of view, was "under fair and free conditions". In other words, the Church was not expected to take sides through spiritual sanctions or otherwise. Although some of the archival material in London relating specifically to the Mintoff-Gonzi clashes has been subjected to a 50-year rule and therefore it will not be available before several years from now, it would be safe to assume that privately the Vatican would have been nudging Gonzi in the same direction: not to pronounce himself openly one way or the other in a referendum on the independence question. Gonzi himself was in something of a quandary: he was no militant for early independence but nor would he risk being saddled with Mintoff's version of it. The parties which had been closest to the Curia, were the three smaller ones opposing early independence, including Dr Ganado's; but the only party which could effectively stand up to Mintoff's and carry the day was Borg Olivier's.

By the time that the referendum was held at the beginning of May 1964, it was as clear as ever it had been where the Church and the Archbishop stood with regard to the MLP's 'six points'. On his return from London on 1st March, Archbishop Gonzi said at the airport that he had made it clear to Sandys that he would help so far as he could to resolve matters but that he would reject any attempt

¹⁴ See the stencilled file 'Government of Malta: Background Material on the Referendum on the Proposed Constitution for Independence within the Commonwealth 1964', Dept. of Information, Valletta, 1964, ff. 4-5, OPM Arch.; and above, I, 8.

constitutionally to shackle the church's freedom in Malta. Interestingly, some weeks earlier the archbishop had met in Rome with Dr Albert V. Hyzler of the MLP and Cardinal Cicognani. According to Hyzler, the main point made to him by Gonzi was that it would be enough for the MLP to bind itself to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church for the interdict to be withdrawn.¹⁵ Nothing came of this; the church and the party periodically blamed each other for not wanting to make peace. Mintoff on his part disparaged Gonzi to an extent that led Hugh Kay of *The Catholic Herald* to write that such insults "would lose all sympathy for any political party in this country."¹⁶

Mintoff had told a public meeting on 28th February, while Gonzi was in London, that he had no quarrel with the Church or with religion "but those who represented Christ had denigrated His teachings and brought you misery and poverty." The Vicar General, Mgr Galea, promptly telegraphed a message of solidarity to the Archbishop in London. That was shortly before Gonzi's return to a tremendous popular welcome at the airport.

Addressing a crowd from the main balcony of St John's in Valletta on 1st March, the Archbishop delivered a political homily in the course of which he denounced Mintoff as "an apostate" who had denied Christ's teaching, at least in practice. He accused Mintoff of lies, insults, insinuations, and asked those gathered before him in the square below if they wanted Malta to have such a person as Prime Minister. The MLP organ retaliated by asking if the Public Meetings Ordinance applied to everyone alike, and what action was the Police Commissioner taking?¹⁷ On the following Sunday 8th March, during

¹⁵ Int. rep., annex, 6 Jan.-7 Feb 1964, sec., para. 2; *ibid.*, 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., f. 1, para. 3. See above on earlier threats of resignation by Borg Olivier, esp.

¹⁶ Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, p. 416.

¹⁷ "Il-Meeting Kontra l-Ligi Quddiem San Gwann: L-Ordinanza tal-Meetings Tapplika għall-Arcisqof?", *Il-Helsien*, 4 Mar. 1964, p.1.

a large meeting in his home base of Cospicua, Mintoff enumerated all the "lies" told about him by the Archbishop and asked the crowd: "Do you want a liar as your Archbishop?" More ominously, during his Cospicua meeting in the morning Mintoff had claimed that his 'six points' had already been conceded by the British Government. Early that evening *The Bulletin* - a good news story from the morning always greatly boosted its sales - had listed these 'six points': civil marriage would be permitted; religious teaching in schools would become voluntary; there would be a common right of burial in state-maintained cemeteries; the police could enter churches if bell-ringing interfered with public meetings; public morality, decency and public order would be interpreted according to generally accepted Western principles not according to one particular faith; the *privilegium fori* would be withdrawn and threats of temporal or spiritual injury would become an electoral offence.

On the same day, Gonzi again warned against the possibility that anti-Catholic clauses could be inserted into the new Constitution. In what Ganado called "the strongest speech I have ever heard him make", the Archbishop told the crowd:

We must resist a constitution that is unbecoming of Catholic Malta and, if this were to be imposed, your bishop is the first one who would not obey such a law. First we must obey God, and then men. Your bishop is ready to suffer like so many other bishops who have suffered behind the Iron Curtain. If that happened, they would have to enlarge the prisons to half the size of Malta because the clergy will follow me.¹⁸

Evidently keen to keep up the morale of his supporters and to ensure a continuing rift between the PN and the 'church' parties, Mintoff was saying that the 'six points' were in the bag (not unlike when he had declared that Integration was 'in the bag'; but then it wasn't). Gonzi's 'prison' speech was delivered that evening, at a

¹⁸ Ganado, vol. 4, pp. 416-417.

ceremony in St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, when about one thousand members of the clergy and religious orders assembled to renew their ordination vows before His Grace, after having marched in procession all the way down Kingsway in a pilgrimage to St John's.¹⁹

Gonzi was not one to pull back punches when attacked. The 'prison' speech was followed by a huge rally in Mintoff's hometown Cospicua on 15th March, in which a resolution was passed declaring that the Maltese people and the parties loyal to the Church would not accept a constitution that contained clauses contrary to the Church's freedom. Whether by coincidence or design, on the following day the joint Anglo-Maltese declaration was issued saying that no decisions would be taken on the constitution before a referendum was held.

On the assumption that early independence was desired, since the main parties agreed on that - and what was holding things up was a disagreement as to its constitutional form - the question posed by the Borg Olivier administration seemed a perfectly legitimate one. It would tell the British Government, through a secret ballot, whether a majority of the electors approved of the Independence constitution being proposed by the Maltese Government, or not. On the surface of things that made perfect sense. But there were many undercurrents which rendered that seemingly simple and straightforward question suspect and open to question. The small 'church' parties opposed Mintoff's 'six points' - and Mintoff - with at least as much vigour as they opposed immediate independence from Britain. Their quarrel with the Nationalists was not actually about the administration's choice of constitution at all: it was about the grant of Independence. As things now stood, Independence was still due on 31st May, which was no more than three weeks after the dates set by the administration for the holding of the referendum. These were the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of May, 1964.

¹⁹ Int. rep., 7 Mar.-7 Apr. 1964, sec., f. 1, para.1-2; Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 416-417.

The train had left the station and Borg Olivier had no intention of stopping it in its tracks. In a sudden burst of energy, which left the Opposition breathless and seething, on 30th March he laid on the table of the House a copy of the proposed independence constitution, which was basically the same draft advocated at the end of July 1963. The debate opened on the night of 31st March and in one division after another carried by 26 to 23 votes the time limits for it were fixed. On 1st April Borg Olivier had this endorsed (by 26 votes to 16), and opened the 'debate' on the second reading of the referendum bill. On 4th April this was passed in an all-night sitting (by 25 votes to 5).²⁰ The smaller parties held that the constitution being debated would not be the one granted because Britain had the final say, so the six points would be put into it anyway.²¹ The question, in its final form, would read thus: Do you approve of the Constitution for Independence proposed by the Government of Malta, endorsed by the Legislative Assembly and published in the Malta Government Gazette?

On the very same day a list of referendum commissioners to serve under the principal electoral officer were named, submitted to the governor for approval, and promptly approved by him. The confidential written opinion from the Prime Minister to the Governor was initialled by every member of Cabinet, also on the same day. Of the eight commissioners one, Paul Sceberras, an accountant, was a former president of the GWU. The others were lawyers.²² Three days later, Dorman, acting on Borg Olivier's

²⁰ 'Government of Malta: Background Material on the Referendum...', *op.cit.*; Int. rep., 7 Mar-7 Apr 1964, sec., enc. (in six copies) Wakefield/Sandys, 11 Apr. 1964, sec., f. 5, 926/1822/48655.

²¹ "Debate on Constitution in Malta Parliament", *Times of Malta*, 1 Apr. 1964, p.1.

²² Edwin G. Bonello, Hugh Harding, Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, John Pullicino, Vincent Scerri, George Vassallo and Edwin Busuttil, who was also a university professor. Harding was a judge.

recommendation, appointed nine revising officers, all Magistrates, in accordance with the Referendum Act (Act VI of 1964).²³

On 10th April in a written parliamentary reply Sandys announced the names of the persons who had been appointed as referendum observers. The head of the delegation was Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton, President of the Pension Appeals Tribunal for England and Wales; he was a jurist of great experience having served as attorney-general in Cyprus, Kenya and Malaya in the 1940s, then as Chief Justice in the Federation of Malaya, and of Nigeria, as well as President of the West African Court of Appeal in the 1950s. Of the other four members, two were MPs, Sir Lionel Heald, Q.C., Conservative, and Elwyn Jones, Q.C., Labour. Of the remaining two, Sir Richard Ramage, C.M.G., had had some direct experience of Malta, having assisted the Lt. Governor from 1935 to 1939, before serving in various African colonies. The other member was an academic, Professor R. E. Wraith, C.B.E.; specialized in electoral questions, Professor Wraith had lectured at Ibadan, Nigeria's leading university at that time, and also chaired the electoral commission there.²⁴ It was a representative and high level delegation that would brook no nonsense.

As the referendum dates approached, the temperature started to rise. The press were on the look out for signs or clues as to what Britain really intended to do. Replies to parliamentary questions in the British Houses of Parliament went under the microscope, as did anything said or done officially or unofficially by anyone presumed

²³ The seven magistrates appointed for Malta were John M. Formosa, Giovanni F. Gouder, Joseph Salomone Reynaud, Giovanni O. Refalo, Joseph Soler, Joseph Debono and Fortunato Mizzi. Two revising officers were appointed for Gozo. These were magistrates Carmelo Scembri and John Anastasi.

²⁴ 'Referendum Observers Named', British Information Services, Press Release, 11/64, 10 Apr. 1964; *enc.*, Wakefield/Borg Olivier, 9 Apr. 1964, 691/63, OPM Arch., Castille; Hansard, Commons, 10 Apr. 1964, cols. 247-248. The two MPs joined the other four members at a later stage due to parliamentary business.

to be in the know. Broadcasting was as controversial as ever, because the MLP kept probing with script submissions that in some way offended or could be said to offend against 'religious sentiment' - and such references would be objectionable under the existing broadcasting ordinance. BBC broadcasts were also relayed to Malta, so commentaries on that medium were similarly subject to scrutiny and liable to arouse controversy. Religious public gatherings could easily turn political or be seen to have political connotations, if only by the presence of certain politicians but not others, a stir, a handshake, a cheer. The logistics of the referendum itself were competently taken in hand in accordance with traditional Maltese electoral practices in what were now the ten electoral divisions (eight before 1962), so that when the voting days arrived no serious complaints arose on the conduct of the referendum or the counting. The 'trusted friend' formula used in the Integration referendum in 1956, purportedly to assist illiterates in the polling booths, was not resorted to again.

What position would the Church take? Would it advise, instruct or morally oblige voters to sway in this or that direction? And how would answers to the question put, be interpreted? What directives would the parties give, and why? Was this at all a referendum about Independence itself, now or later; or was it solely and simply about the Constitution being proposed for it by the government of the day? The instructions to voters in English and in Maltese on the ballot paper were clear enough:

The voter should indicate his vote as follows -

If he approves of the Constitution for independence..., he should place a mark in the square opposite the word 'YES'.

If he does not approve of that Constitution he should place a mark in the square opposite the word 'NO'.²⁵

²⁵ 'Ballot Paper - Directions to Voter', Fourth Schedule (Section 24) of the Referendum Bill, C 37, Supplement, *Malta Govt. Gazette*, no. 11623, 30 Mar. 1964, Part C.

For two months there was a barrage about the referendum in the newspapers. The most disadvantaged in this domain were the Nationalists, who had no mass circulation paper. Labour had easy access to the Union Press papers, which belonged to the General Workers Union, especially now the daily *l-Orizzont*. The 'church' or 'centre' parties - Mabel's PCP above all - were given generous coverage in the Strickland House papers, the daily *Times of Malta* and *Il-Berqa*. Ganado and MPs from the 'church' parties also contributed articles to the church paper *Lehen is-Sewwa*. On the church side there were also *Il-Haddiem* which became a daily in 1964, and the Moviment Azzjoni Socjali's *Il-Qawmien*. The smaller parties had their official organs, none of which were fully-fledged newspapers, although strident efforts were made to carry the message across in Pellegrini's *It-Tarka*, Ganado's *Malta Taghna*. Apart from her daily and Sunday national mass circulation newspapers, Strickland also had a strictly party publication, *Forward 'Il Quddiem*. Although weakly organized Borg Olivier's party had the advantage of being in office, and could make some use of the usual trappings of officialdom through national broadcasting, the Department of Information for photography and press releases, and also its freely distributed information publication *Ir-Review*. In a front-page article by Dr Benny Camilleri, the PN organ *Il-Poplu* lambasted the smaller parties for not knowing what they wanted: first they opposed Independence because it would bring hunger and misery; now because it would bring Russia and the *sitt punti*. Camilleri then emphasised that the existing Constitution did not have the clauses "in favour of the Church" which the proposed Constitution would have. And it quoted *verbatim* in bold print the two clauses exempting the Church from the human rights provisions of the Constitution, in the exercise of her spiritual rights and duties, or with regard to any law enacted to protect the religion of Malta.²⁶

In its 1st April issue, *Ir-Review* carried a front-page story explaining the Independence Constitution, together with a quotation from a

²⁶ "Huwa l-Poplu li Jrid Jiddeciedi", *Il-Poplu*, 27 Mar. 1964, p.1.

statement by Sandys in the Commons on 17th March, wherein he expressed a hope that a referendum would show how the Maltese people felt about delicate ecclesiastical questions, which he did not wish to resolve himself. The story was illustrated by a photograph of Borg Olivier being carried shoulder-high during a Nationalist demonstration. Strickland's party objected in particular to this selective quotation from Sandys, as well as two photographs showing supporters waving the Nationalist Party flag:

This Ghanaian touch in Malta conflicts with the political geography since the single party state is not yet established, as in most cases this contemporary trend evolves after independence... ²⁷

Pellegrini, Ganado and Strickland gave press conferences immediately after the announcement by Sandys in the Commons that referendum observers were being appointed to witness and report on the conduct of the referendum. They claimed that the referendum proposed would be on the wrong question, as the electorate would not be asked whether they wanted independence now or not. Strickland and Pellegrini hinted that their parties might well be instructed to boycott the referendum, while Ganado reserved his position. The boycott stratagem had been employed to good effect by the PN during the 1956 referendum on Integration, when only 44% of the total electorate had supported Integration, although most of those who did vote had supported it. As a result, and for other reasons, Integration had been deferred and after further complications it was abandoned.

In replying to supplementary questions by Jo Grimond, the Liberal leader, and Mr Williams, which sought to establish that the people opposed to Independence could express such views in the referendum, Sandys had said that those who wished to express themselves against Independence would be able to do so. On

²⁷ Mamo/Director of Information, 11 Apr. 1964, OPM Arch., Castille.

returning from London, Borg Olivier had said that his referendum did not envisage an opportunity for people to give their views on the issue of independence since this chance had been available at the last election, the majority of people had shown themselves in favour of independence, the Prime Minister contended.

Political leaders in Malta also gave wide publicity to another of the replies by Sandys in answer to a supplementary question by Harold Wilson, the Labour leader, that he had very much in mind the question of "human rights and liberties", and that the British parliament had the last word in regard to the constitution for Malta. The small parties quickly exploited this to argue that Borg Olivier had betrayed Malta into the hands of a Protestant arbitrator who intended, as they claimed *ad nauseam*, to include the MLP's 'six points' in the Independence Constitution whatever the result of the referendum was.

During the Easter weekend a British MP, Mr M. Woodnutt, visited Malta, apparently in a personal capacity. He had talks with party leaders, including Borg Olivier, as well as with Gonzi. Pellegrini said in the Assembly that Woodnutt had assured him as coming from the Colonial Secretary that the 'six points' would be included in the constitution, and also that the issue of Independence was still far from determined. When however Borg Olivier spoke to Woodnutt on the telephone, the latter said that he had only expressed a personal opinion as to what was likely, and that Pellegrini had in any case quoted him inaccurately. Pellegrini countered with the reply that Woodnutt's remarks both on Independence and the Constitution had been typed out and approved by him in the presence of the leaders of the three small parties. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly on 1st April, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Felice, retaliated by saying that unless the people supported the Nationalist draft constitution by a large majority in the referendum, then Sandys would be given the opportunity to introduce Mintoff's anti-clerical provisions in it. The issue was a crucial one because if the smaller parties attracted votes away from the PN out of fear that the constitution being voted on was not the one that would be granted, the MLP would gain in proportion to the PN. The curious,

if not comic, Woodnut episode bore this out, as Borg Olivier took care to make known in the Assembly in exchanges with Pellegrini. When shown Pellegrini's interpretation of what he had purportedly said, Woodnut told Borg Olivier:

He is a naughty; he is very naughty, a very naughty man... Anything I said to Pellegrini was what I personally felt. I can assure you that it did not come from Mr Sandys... But of course not, good Lord, no!... No, no. If you have a good result they (the six points) will not be touched; but if the 'yeses' are few, there would be great pressure in the House from several quarters. They would certainly insist that the points be given due weight... I can assure you that if the 'yeses' are great enough I shall do everything in my power so that you can have the Constitution you want. I would not wish it to be touched. Many of us in the House would do the same.²⁸

Borg Olivier feared a boycott; he knew from experience how effective it could be. During a PN public meeting on 5th April, he was at pains to reassure the Maltese public that his government's form of independence was "dependent on British financial assistance and a defence agreement, both of which were being negotiated." Mintoff's party did not issue any directives to supporters until the very end, requesting in the meantime that the MLP version of "human rights" be incorporated through an Order-in-Council (that is, direct from London, over the head of the Maltese government and of the legislature). This request was of course turned down. Borg Olivier was still hoping that the date of 31st May could somehow be met, although Sandys warned him that it might be very difficult to find parliamentary time for a Malta Independence Bill by then. There was already a presumption that the set date might have to be extended, at least by a short time.

²⁸ "Mr Woodnut u s-sur Pellegrini", *Il-Haddiem*, 7 Apr. 1964, p.1, quoting a press release signed by P. J. Naudi, Director of Information.

During debates in the Assembly, an important amendment supported by all the Opposition parties except Pellegrini's Christian Workers Party, would have allowed for blank votes to be shown separately in the referendum results and not treated as invalid. The intention behind this amendment was that such blank votes should be regarded as cast specifically against early independence.²⁹ This was mainly a Ganado idea, and in fact his Democratic Nationalists were later advised so to vote, neither 'yes' nor 'no' but a vote nonetheless. The Nationalists rejected the amendment so it fell through; but there was nothing to stop at least the three small parties from issuing a common directive to the electorate so to vote, even were such votes to be counted as invalid. In the end, the Opposition parties split. Pellegrini and Strickland said: boycott. Ganado opted to spoil the vote. Mintoff (and the GWU with him) said: vote 'no'. Borg Olivier of course said: vote 'yes'.

What did Gonzi say? He could hardly object to a constitution that was exempting the church in the exercise of her mission from the human rights provisions set out in the constitution itself. But if he gave the nod to the 'yes' vote he would be accused of interfering in politics and the result, whatever it was, would be blamed on him. Moreover, he would have abandoned the parties closest to him, who were against early independence: for that reason, none of them were answering the referendum question in the affirmative. He was under pressure from the Nationalists to back them for fear that if he did not, and as the MLP would be voting against, that could benefit the MLP.

Wakefield had a long talk with Gonzi on the night of 16th April. The church still had not pronounced itself. The Archbishop, who was nearly eighty years old, was looking tired and strained. Wakefield made it seem as if Gonzi was not averse to the prospect of an inconclusive referendum result, which could put off the prospect of an early independence. On the following morning he sent London a telegram using these words:

²⁹ Int. rep., 7 Mar.-7 Apr. 1964, sec., ff. 2-6, para. 5-11, 926/1822/48655.

He has been under heavy pressure from Cabinet to advise Catholics to support constitution in referendum. Centre parties have exerted pressure in opposite direction. He had no wish to facilitate independence and in light of what I told him about consequences of inconclusive referendum result he will definitely not (repeat not) advise Catholics to vote "yes."

Lacking positive guidance from the Church, a substantial proportion of the electorate would abstain or put in blank ballot papers, the UK Commissioner expected. He was also giving further thought to the advisability of using an "arranged P.Q. to counter misrepresentation of Secretary of State's intentions."³⁰

The telling implication in this authoritative communication lies in that, for Britain as for the Church, it might not be such a bad thing if, in the circumstances, Malta's independence were indeed postponed, perhaps indefinitely. An "inconclusive" referendum result would legitimize such a reversal of policy.³¹ Wakefield knew that Gonzi was wary of Independence, as he had occasion to sound him out and to report about it more than once. In his own way a patriot and a loyalist at the same time, Gonzi wished Malta to thrive but without untying the colonial knot. What was he up to now?

Relations between the Maltese and British governments were somewhat strained now. Some of the replies Sandys was giving to parliamentary questions in the Commons were annoying the Nationalists. They were particularly annoyed by his replies to questions put by two Labour MPs, Mr Driberg on 21st April, and Mr Bottomley on 24th April. Pleasing to the small parties, these replies greatly annoyed Borg Olivier. They seemed to him to imply that the British Government had an open mind on the issue of Independence, as well as on the form of the Constitution. Borg

³⁰ Tel., Wakefield/Lansdowne, 16 Apr. 1964, sec., no. 105A, 926/1872/48489.

³¹ For a fuller understanding of the political implications of this timely encounter, see below, II, 15; see also above, I, 4.

Olivier made a strong protest to Sandys about the answer he gave Bottomley. Four days later, practically on the eve of the referendum, Sandys issued a public statement in London to the effect that the position of the British government regarding the Catholic Church and the question of Independence remained unaltered.³²

Obviously fed by his Malta contact, Driberg on 21st April asked if Sandys was aware that Borg Olivier in a public speech on 29th March had stated that if the Maltese people voted "yes" in the forthcoming referendum, he would guarantee that no clauses would be included in the constitution that did not enjoy the blessing of the Maltese Roman Catholic hierarchy. Driberg wanted to know if such a guarantee was supported by Her Majesty's Government. Sandys already knew of Borg Olivier's speech, so much so that he said he had read differing newspaper reports of it, but he added:

I have, of course, given no guarantees which would restrict the complete freedom of decision of the British Government, with whom the ultimate responsibility rests. In coming to any such decision, we shall naturally take full account of the wishes of the Maltese people.³³

On 24th April Bottomley had asked whether, for the guidance of the electors in the forthcoming referendum in Malta, Sandys would state the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the interpretation to be placed on a "Yes" vote, a "No" vote, a spoilt or blank vote, and an abstention; and what was now his policy regarding the grant of independence when the result of the referendum was known. In the last sentence of his reply to this, Sandys had said: "If the result of the referendum should prove inconclusive, the whole position will obviously have to be reviewed afresh." In the light of what Wakefield seems to have told Gonzi about the consequences of an "inconclusive" result - followed by Gonzi's double-fisted assurance that electors

³² Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May, f. 2, para. 3, sec., 926/1822/48655.

³³ Hansard, Commons, 21 Apr. 1964, col. 152.

would in no way be advised to vote “yes” - this discourse could assume a different shade of meaning. To put it mildly, it was unduly recalcitrant. But Sandys had also said, before that:

If the referendum produces a decisive affirmative vote, we shall proceed at once with the grant of independence under a constitution on the lines framed by the Malta Government, with such amendments as the British Government may think it necessary to make after further consultation with the Prime Minister of Malta.

Sandys said further that he would regard a “No” vote as implying that the elector either wanted independence under another type of constitution, or that he was “opposed to independence at present.” If there should be an abnormal number of spoil or blank votes, or abstentions, he would “endeavour to determine what significance should be attached to them.”³⁴

This meant, at face value, that a large ‘no’ vote could be taken to mean opposition to independence as well as a preference for a different independence constitution; but the two positions were not the same, least of all in Malta when to vote “no” was the MLP’s directive to its supporters. Such words remained sibylline, liable to be interpreted as suited the moment, and therefore pretty meaningless.

Borg Olivier’s “guarantee” was part of his referendum campaign strategy. In a Nationalist meeting at Hamrun on 29th March, he was reported as having said that:

If the majority votes for the Draft Constitution, the Nationalist Party guarantees that no Clauses or the ‘Six Points’ would be incorporated in the Constitution without the blessing of the Nationalist Party and of the Church.³⁵

³⁴ Hansard, Commons, 24 Apr. 1964, cols. 213-214.

³⁵ “Political Meeting: Nationalists at Hamrun”, *Times of Malta*, 30 Mar. 1964, p.5.

On 19th April a circular letter from the Archbishop was read out in all churches. It declared that Independence was a political issue in which the Church would not intervene. The circular letter was couched in vague terms and gave no clear guidance about how to vote. The Nationalists were disappointed but argued that the actual meaning of the circular was that the church had no real objection to the constitution. The centre parties were ostensibly heartened by the circular, interpreting it in support of their assertion that failure to vote "yes" in no way meant disrespect for the church. In the MLP, some said that the church had only taken this position because of the presence in Malta of the British referendum observers; others said that in spite of that individual priests would still keep up a whispering campaign against their party, as no doubt some would have done.³⁶

Gonzi's position in Malta, and in this referendum campaign, brings to mind the charismatic Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix, in an earlier referendum. Half-way through the First World War, in 1916, and again in 1917, the Labour-led Australian federal government sought to introduce conscription, to beef up support for Britain and the British Empire in what until then was proving to be a trying confrontation with Germany and her allies. Having lost a first referendum, the government geared up for a second one a year later. Archbishop Mannix opposed conscription, the second time more decidedly than the first. An Irishman and a Home Ruler, Archbishop Mannix had seen Sir Edward Carson, a 'mutineer' and founding-father of the Ulster Volunteer force, being taken into the British Cabinet in 1915 after Asquith's Home Rule Bill had three times been approved by the House of Commons supposedly becoming law; and in 1916 he had just seen, also, the leaders of the Easter Rising in Dublin executed. Although Mannix had not wished to be involved, in his view Australia was doing as much as it should be called upon to do, and he said so. He did not agree that Australians should be forced

³⁶ Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., f. 3, para.4; 926/1822/48655; "Bishops' Circular Letter - Independence a Political Issue - 'Church does not intervene', *Times of Malta*, 20 Apr. 1964, p. 9.

to fight on Britain's side during the First World War. It was hardly a religious question, although arguably a moral one. The government again lost the referendum, this time blaming Mannix for their defeat. The Labour Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, wrote Evatt, "made his fight definitely an anti-Mannix fight, as a matter of tactics. Mannix, said he, is against the British Empire. Very well, then we are against Mannix. At one time it looked as if the whole organization of the campaign was very much less concerned with the defeat of the Hun than with that of a turbulent Catholic prelate."³⁷ Thus provoked, noted Santamaria,

Dr Mannix chose to fight, not on the issue of the morality of conscription - he did not oppose conscription when Australia was threatened during the Japanese War - but on the issue of the limits of Australian participation in a war which was predominantly European. This issue coalesced the ancient emotion of Irish nationalism and the burgeoning realization of Australia's national identity.³⁸

In terms of Empire, Archbishop Gonzi was no Irishman. Although necessarily Italianate by educational formation, he had never in politics been a Nationalist, except by force of circumstance. In a way, Gonzi was to Mintoff what Mannix was to Hughes. Quite unlike Mannix, however, Gonzi was a loyalist. He secured his nomination to the archbishopric having proved his credentials during the Second World War. In an over-long career, he had his fair share of

³⁷ H.V. Evatt, *Australian Labour Leader*, Angus and Robertson, 1940, p. 410; quoted after B. A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, OUP, 1981, pp. 29-30. (In the history of Maltese emigration, Hughes is infamous for his refusal to allow Maltese migrants to disembark in Sydney in 1916, sending them instead to New Caledonia. Listen to *Il-Ballata tal-Maltin ta' New Caledonia*, recorded in Sydney by a community group some years ago.)

³⁸ Santamaria, *op.cit.*, p.30; see esp. chap. 3: 'The Mannix Tradition', pp. 20-32. On Mannix and anti-Communist politics in the Democratic Labour Party between the wars, see also G. Starr, K. Richmond and G. Maddox, *Political Parties in Australia*, Heinemann, 1978, esp. pp.335-344.

travail and he strove to organise the diocese with a paternalistic pastoral authority conveyed in the articulated diction of a typical opening address: "*Għeżiež ħuti u mahbubin uliedi*."³⁹ Between Church and Empire, Gonzi would always choose the Church, his Church - which is why he opposed Mintoff's plan for Malta's integration with Britain in the mid-fifties, and now the 'six points'. Moreover, in Malta as in Ireland, the Catholic religion had long been emotionally and politically a bastion of patriotism and anti-colonial nationalism. The British were Protestants - and British. Thus Catholicism was a factor, perhaps the overriding factor, in a Maltese national identity. But the Catholic prelate in Malta, unlike Ireland, had not been persecuted by the occupying regime, so he was not a rebel. A bishop suspected of nationalist sentiments in the fortress colony, and therefore of disloyalty to the Crown, would be 'transferred' before he knew what hit him, as happened to the francophile Mgr Antonio Maria Bugahiar in 1890.⁴⁰ On the whole, the Maltese bishop tended to mediate for the Ascendancy (if that Irish term bears transplantation), which in Malta ever since 1800 took good care not to disturb his weaning of the flock. Belonging essentially to the Establishment, he still was not, like Archbishop Makarios in Cyprus, an Ethnarch; he did not actually *rule*. His power was more moral than strictly political, but in the Maltese colonial context that power was very considerable indeed. Even after the advent of political parties and elected leaders, in his Candlemas 'state of the colony' speech in the first week of February each year, the Governor had all the parish priests gathered before him at the palace. The British had liked to regard the Maltese bishop as the first citizen, an interlocutor for the subject people; the parish priests represented the localities. Gonzi served as military chaplain during the First World War and was knighted for his

³⁹ "My dear brethren and beloved children." On Gonzi see the two volume biography by Tonna and Galea, *op.cit.*. See also D. Fenech, *The Making of Archbishop Gonzi* (Malta, 1976), and the full-scale interview with him, "L-Arcisqof Gonzi Jitkellem", in *Storja* 78.

⁴⁰ On Buhagiär see H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony*, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-72.

services during the Second World War by George VI in 1946. In 1963, the *caudillo* Francisco Franco conferred on him the title of Grand Cross of the Order of St Raimond de Penafort; and in accepting that decoration from a Spanish cardinal visiting Malta, Gonzi praised Franco for having saved Europe from Communism.⁴¹ Equally anti-Communist, and inveterate by longevity, Mannix would have been all out for independence. In this Gonzi was, at the very least, more guarded. When it came to the referendum, he stood aside, if that is what he did. Sandys too stood on the fence: it was not "his" referendum, he told the Commons, waiting to see how things would turn out.

There were various incidents before the voting took place, practically all of them bearing on religious or ecclesiastical aspects. One concerned a typical MLP skirmish with the Broadcasting Authority over the vetting of a script because of giving offence to religious sentiment. That was little wonder, given the trading of attributions going on - "apostate", "liar"... During a press conference given by the referendum observers at the UK Commission in Floriana on 29th April 1964, Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton was pressed on the question of broadcasting. Responding to an assertion that the MLP had been "refused time on Malta TV" because it had been alleged that it was "offending against religious sentiment", Foster-Sutton said that "it was not refused..."

The M.L.P. felt unable to accept the facilities because of the state of the law. There were objections to some passages in their script. We have had an opportunity of examining the script. That is arguable.⁴²

⁴¹ 'Spanish Cardinal's Visit -Malta's Archbishop Honoured', *Times of Malta*, 18 Feb. 1964, p. 3; Int. rep., 7 Feb. - 6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 5, 926/1822/48655; see below, II, 14.

⁴² 'Referendum Observers - Press Conference held at the Office of the U.K. Commission at 11.15 a.m. on Wednesday, 29th April 1964', f. 3. This is a stencilled transcription, OPM Arch., Castille.

Asked if they regarded it as fair that a person should be allowed to express his opinion in the press and at meetings and then be barred from broadcasting because of a clause regarding religious sentiment, Foster-Sutton did not think they should be asked to express opinions on "the suitability of legislation." In reply to a further question, he said that they were aware of the difference existing between the Press Law and the Broadcasting Ordinance.

In reply to another question, Foster-Sutton confirmed that the Archbishop had done them "the courtesy and honour" of receiving them on two occasions. Yes, at their own request, on both occasions. Would he say that "any individual priest" could offer advice to anyone who came to him for personal advice? It was difficult to say that he (a priest) was not entitled to his personal view. Were the observers aware that "in the confessionals" the faithful were being told that to support the M.L.P. was "a mortal sin"? They had heard that being alleged. Did he have any proof of it? They had only heard it alleged, but it had to be remembered that everybody was free to give personal advice. Did he think it was fair and free for Union leaders to address and issue directives to vote as near as possible to the directive of a political party? First the church, now the union leaders - they would be reporting about that.

During the last elections aged and handicapped persons were taken out of institutes to vote: did the observers think that was fair? "The same thing happens in every civilized country in the world." Did he think there was freedom of speech in Malta? "Yes."⁴³

On 18th March, as the referendum campaign was picking momentum, and in the wake of the renewed 'politico-religious' conflagration, a BBC commentator stoked the coles. In a broadcast from London on the BBC's Overseas Service, Honor Balfour described the Maltese church as "mediaeval." Miss Balfour also took it upon herself to define Archbishop Michael Gonzi as "the complete

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ff. 3-6, and *passim*.



The British referendum observers during their press conference and (below) doing the rounds and talking over matters, in cooperation with the police.

political prelate." Music to Minto's ears, such unrestrained talk from the mouth of a foreign journalist, relayed into thousands of Maltese homes via the Rediffusion set in their bedrooms and kitchens, provoked a furious reaction. In one fell swoop it counterweighed anything Minto might have been prevented from saying locally in the media for fear of offending religious sentiment.⁴⁴

In the opposition sections of the local press, there were no holds barred. *L-Orizzont* sometimes allowed scaremongering which put the M.L.P.'s own pro-independence stand into question. The people wanted to know what the position of the Malta pound was going to be, the position of those who had their money deposited in local and foreign banks, how our money would be employed in the sterling area or in other countries, what the bleak prospects forecast by the Governor in the Candlemas speech were, asked one correspondent.⁴⁵ Borg Olivier's exercise in presenting his Constitution to parliament, said one editorial, was all a waste of time, for the simple reason that the position of all the parties was now well known.⁴⁶ The same edition of the paper quoted Ganado's conviction - a favourite of both Mabel's and Pellegrini's - that what had happened in Cyprus and in Zanzibar could happen in Malta because "we were not yet prepared for it"; independence could lead to a *coup d'état* and "bring the Russians to Malta." Those who voted in favour of Borg Olivier's constitution would be "throwing a noose round their necks." You could ask the people whether they wanted a republic or a monarchy, whether to stay in the Commonwealth or

⁴⁴ In commenting on this incident in their monthly report, the Local Intelligence Committee said that "the rage and fury of the Catholic Press in Malta showed their skins to be childishly thin." Int. rep., 7 Mar.-7 Apr. 1964, sec., f. 7, para. 12, 926/1822/48655.

⁴⁵ *L-Orizzont*, 7 Mar. 1964. Such articles, especially editorials, were translated into English or summarised in English by the U.K. Commission and circulated to a restricted circle. The newspaper which was most accessible, but not necessarily to the populace, was *The Times of Malta*; no translations of that were necessary.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1964.

not, but you could not ask the people to say "whether they want human rights and freedom" and decide by the majority, according to *L-Orizzont*. So long as there was a section, however small, which wanted these rights and freedoms, the British Government as the metropolitan authority was in duty bound to grant them. If it was a question of postponing independence a little for something worthwhile, that wouldn't matter.⁴⁷ In another editorial, the GWU paper held that the MLP had already notified the Colonial Secretary that no consultations in the country would be considered to be free unless certain human rights were included now "by Order-in-Council." The endorsement of the independence constitution by the Maltese parliament within only two days was insulting and irresponsible. The paper published the directive for a boycott of the referendum by the Pellegrini party, which laid down three conditions: that Borg Olivier obtain guarantees from Sandys that Mintoff's points would not be included; that he make public the financial and economic arrangements which were being negotiated; and that he should say how Malta's internal security would be safeguarded.⁴⁸ In another editorial, *L-Orizzont* held that the amendment to chapter IV of the government's own constitution (on human rights) which privileged the church went against the fundamental basis of those same rights. To make exception to these laws, these rights, meant creating grounds for abuse, harm and corruption, because a privilege often generated corruption and was in itself the negation of freedom and democracy.⁴⁹ The paper again questioned independence on economic grounds: what would be the effects on Malta's economy of a defence treaty and of Commonwealth membership? The people had practically forgotten the economic implications of the vote which they were being asked to give.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 Mar. 1964.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1964.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1964.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr. 1964.

No sooner had the referendum campaign opened than *l-Orizzont* objected to the haste being shown: under the circumstances the people's answer ought to reject the government's constitution as they deemed fit. In a meeting at Mosta the MLP's president Danny Cremona, went so far as to allege that under the 'exception' clauses, ten shillings could be retained from each pay packet for the church's fund. Under such a law, he added, the government could say that the MLP should cease to exist. Cremona also alleged that under the proposed constitution those who left the Island could not return.⁵¹

Another strident paper was Pellegrini's *It-Tarka*. A referendum was being held through their efforts.⁵² Mintoff's "points" would come with independence - that was a certainty. Everything pointed to the fact that Sandys would concede some of Mintoff's "points" if not all of them, if independence came now. This meant that the learned Borg Olivier, thanks to his childish obsession with independence,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6 Apr. 1964. He may have been referring to the MLP's amendment which would facilitate the repatriation of Maltese who had been naturalised overseas, as in the UK, whereby these would be treated as Maltese citizens while they stayed in Malta if they returned, without having to renounce to their other passport. There was no prohibition in the draft constitution against returnees; but there was no provision for any kind of dual citizenship for Maltese after the appointed day either. The allegation that under the Nationalist constitution Maltese who left Malta would be unable to return was made more than once, not least by Cremona. The point at issue was citizenship not freedom of movement. As however there were tens of thousands of Maltese emigrants and many others who had taken jobs or got married in the UK and elsewhere, while they still had family in Malta, the problem of mobility in relation to citizenship after independence directly or indirectly interested a large segment of the population. It was not known that those of Maltese descent who had become nationals of other countries would have wanted to revert to a Maltese citizenship, losing their other one from Britain, Canada, the U.S.A., Australia, etc.; hence they could be seen as disadvantaged should they ever wish to return for a long stay or indefinitely as expatriates in their own country. The MLP's amendment to the draft constitution was more liberal, it was a facilitator, but it did not go so far as fully to recognise dual citizenship rights for Maltese nationals. Such dual citizenship rights for Maltese nationals as were introduced in the late 1980s were in fact still quite restricted.

⁵² *It-Tarka*, 19 Mar. 1964.

would cause the church to be deprived of some of her rights. According to the Nationalists, if the church did not interfere in the referendum she would be failing in her duties and obligations.⁵³ Another article was headed: 'Every "Yes" in the Referendum is a Vote in favour of the Six Points.'⁵⁴ Borg Olivier's referendum was immoral. Catholic Malta had been betrayed by Borg Olivier when he left the last word to Sandys. Every person who voted "Yes" would be "putting the noose round the Archbishop's neck." The Nationalists made no mention of the Pope's warnings that "from the frying pan of Colonialism we will fall into the fire of Communism." To vote "Yes" in the referendum would "sign the death warrant of the workers if it were successful."⁵⁵

The church paper *Lehen is-Sewwa* also carried articles that tended to show independence in a bad light. In much the same strain as Pellegrini, Ganado wrote that if the government constitution were approved by a considerable number of votes, the British government would immediately grant independence and the British Parliament would undoubtedly insert the worst of Mintoff's amendments.⁵⁶ One article was entitled 'A "Yes" Vote means disaster for the church!':

As usual, Dr Borg Olivier wants to deceive the Catholics by forcing them to vote "yes" so that he can get independence; and then, when the "Points" will have been included in the Constitution, he will strike his breast and exculpate himself by saying that not enough people voted "Yes".⁵⁷

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1964.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 Apr. 1964.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 Apr. 1964.

⁵⁶ *Lehen is-Sewwa*, 2 Apr. 1964.

⁵⁷ 'Our Forum', *ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1964.

Loopholes in Draft Constitution 'CHURCH'S POSITION WEAKENED'

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Released by the D.N.P. distributed to Pressmen by the Democratic Nationalist Party yesterday morning during a Press Conference, presided over by Dr. Herbert Ganado, the Party leader.

The draft contained an examination of the Independence Constitution proposed by the Nationalist Party, as far as the Church and Religion of these islands were concerned. Dr. Ganado reviewed certain clauses which affect the Church.

The D.N.P. Leader pointed out that Article 41 (1) of the Nationalist Party Constitution says that "all persons in Malta shall have full freedom of conscience and enjoy the free exercise of their respective modes of worship."

Dr. Ganado emphasised that the word "person" may also be referred to the Church as a moral person. The leader added that all religions are treated equally in the Constitution, although in Article 2, the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion is declared as the religion of Malta. However, in this article the religion is not treated as a privileged one.

He stated that the Catholic Church fails, as any other religion, under the disputation of Article 2. Thus an anti-Catholic Government can disrupt and confuse the exercise of the Catholic Religion under the excuse of the interference of public safety, public order, as laid down in the mentioned sub-section of the article "Protection of Freedom of Conscience."

Protection —

Dr. Ganado said the provision given by Article 48 (1b) of the Constitution is not new and not enough effective. This article, on which is based the whole protection for the Church, will most probably not be accepted by the British Parliament. Besides, the loophole which can easily be used as a weapon by an anti-Catholic Government.

"This Article states that nothing done by the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of its spiritual powers and duties shall be held to be in contravention of any of the provisions of this Chapter."

A non-Catholic government could, by a simple majority vote, enact a law punishing by imprisonment the Bishop not because he had infringed a human rights clause, but because he was endangering the safety and good order of the nation, the D.N.P. leader stated.

"Any government, with the simple majority, can include the so-called 'Red Point' can expropriate the immovable property of the Church and can abolish the law which exempts the Archbishop from being imprisoned. The Bishop would be charged with anything beyond his spiritual function. He could, for example, be charged for having broken Defence



Dr. Herbert Ganado addresses Press representatives at his Party offices yesterday morning.

or similar regulations by sending money abroad. This charge not uncommon in Roman Catholic countries," said the speaker.

"Touching on Article 42 (1), Dr. Ganado said this article gives complete liberty at meetings and broadcasts on television and radio. There are restrictions in the suburbs in the City of London and public security public good order, morality or decency but there is absolutely nothing in the interest of the religion and of the Church. This article includes clauses in protection of the Courts and Parliament but nothing on the Church."

He stressed that Section 121 of the Constitution, which protected the independence of the Broadcasting Authority, but the protection of "religious sections" and the presence of the Archbishop's presence contained in the original Broadcasting Law, were not being entrenched in the Constitution.

Referring to Catholic teachers, Dr. Ganado said that Article 41 (3) states that "no person shall be subject of any disability or be excluded from holding any office other than an office entailing religious teaching of the Roman Catholic faith by reason of his religious profession."

He pointed out that in all schools, including elementary schools, non-Catholic or anti-Catholic teachers, may teach everything with the exception of religion. "If this can be tolerated due to the lack of Catholic teachers for certain subjects, in superior schools, there is no reason for this in elementary schools," Dr. Ganado added.

Privileges —

The D.N.P. Leader said that the Party had proposed in London, with the cooperation of the socialists that were in London to agree that "the Roman Catholic religion and the Roman Catholic Church continue to possess in Malta those rights, privileges and prerogatives which were obtaining on the date of Independence."

Dr. Ganado said the amendments would have carried enough weight to protect the Church's rights. The Constitution would have disallowed any law challenging the position of the Church as it is now. To alter this article one would have to obtain a two-thirds majority in Parliament and a referendum majority — something not easy to achieve.

In 1813 of Protest-

ant Government this has never occurred. With independence, in the recent time, it will occur," Dr. Ganado stated.

The speaker referred to Article 48 (1) as "dangerous." It says "nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law for the protection of the religion of Malta shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of any of the provisions of this Chapter."

Dr. Ganado said that this Article will surely not be accepted by the British Parliament "but it is extra alone it is not dangerous." He explained this article by referring to another law, the Expropriation Law.

"Dr. Ganado said the Government in virtue of this Law, can expropriate lands for defence purposes. And his declaration in this sense cannot be scrutinised by any Court. He pointed out that in the same sense according to the preceding Article 48 (1), a non-Catholic government could, on the presence that it was regulating in defence of religion, pass a law disallowing any Catholic law organisation on the grounds that through its activities, it was harming Church-State relations."

The Court would be able if that law is provided, to scrutinise the defence of the law, pretending that it was issued in defence of religion. Dr. Ganado, who added that the British Parliament, Mr. Douglas, on behalf of the Opposition, has made it clear that the last word rests upon the British Parliament."

Church's Position —

Dr. Ganado then called on the Catholic Press to present the whole truth and the position of the Church in the proposed Constitution.

Dr. Felice Pace, representative of the "Il-Quintus" stressed that if the Church's position was not clear in the proposed Constitution, the Church would have asked the Office of the Attorney-General.

Dr. Ganado remarked that any question relating to the Church's attitude should be put to the Archbishop. The Leader further added that he was not "Il-Quintus" responsible for alleging that the Church did not support the Constitution because she had announced of it and no objection to any clause.

Further counsel qualified, Dr. Ganado said the latter were in any way to ensure the enemies of the Church, as the "Il-Quintus" had made it clear. "The latter should help in this direction by ensuring that there are good Catholic laws."

Answering a question on the Public Services Commission's position in the Constitution, Dr. Ganado said that it was laid enough for the Ministers to choose their own permanent secretaries due to the great confusion involved in such jobs, but it was unfair for the Constitution to lay down that even heads of Departments may be chosen in consultation with the Public Service Commission but not on its recommendations.

Only a politically independent civil service can give efficient service to the community," Dr. Ganado concluded.

Others present at the Press Conference were Chev. Molary, Galt, President; Dr. Albert Ganado, Secretary; and Mr. A. Agius, Treasurer, of the D.N.P.

When Dr Ganado in a press conference a week before the referendum claimed that the Malta Government's proposed Independence Constitution was not truly or sufficiently Catholic, the Department of Information issued an instant and revealing rebuttal. See below II, 10; and III, 16.

ODM/519/64

**GOVERNMENT REPLY TO THE STATEMENT MADE BY DR HERBERT
GANADO REGARDING THE CONSTITUTION**

With reference to the statement made yesterday by Dr Herbert Ganado in which he alleged that "It is not true that the Constitution is Catholic", it is hereby declared as follows:

(1) That when the ecclesiastics who were in London to give advice at the time of the Independence Conference were shown by the representatives of the Nationalist Party in Government

(a) Section 2 of the Constitution which says: "The Religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion";

(b) Section 48(10) of the Constitution which says: "Nothing done by the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of its spiritual powers and duties shall be held to be in contravention of any of the provisions of this Chapter (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual)";

(c) Section 48(11) of the Constitution which says: "Nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law for the protection of the Religion of Malta shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of any of the provisions of this Chapter (Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual)",

the said two ecclesiastics showed themselves to be satisfied and agreed with these clauses and did not suggest any alterations or additions to such clauses.

(2) That when the said two ecclesiastics were shown by the representatives of the Nationalist Party in Government the proposal of the Democratic Nationalist Party which says: "The Roman Catholic Religion and the Roman Catholic Church in Malta shall continue to have in Malta those rights, privileges and prerogatives which it had up to independence day", the said ecclesiastics agreed that this proposal was no longer necessary once the Government inserted in the Constitution the clauses mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

It is also declared that these two ecclesiastics were happy with what relates to the Religion and the Church in the Constitution proposed by the Government.

Department of Information,
24th April, 1964.

"The people were never as muddled as they are now with the coming referendum", wrote Emidio Caruana, a member of the Legislative Assembly. "There are very few who know exactly what the Maltese people are voting for in this Referendum, or better still what was left for the people to decide..."⁵⁸ The government's announcement that a set of independence stamps would be issued was seen as nothing but Nationalist propaganda by Dr Daniel Micallef, writing in *Il-Haddiem* (The Worker). The referendum would be denounced as immoral by the observers who had come to see that everything was free and fair.⁵⁹

According to the 'Stricklandian' *Il-Berqa*, Borg Olivier had asked for independence when every one in his right senses was seeing or hearing of the bloodshed between brothers in countries which had become independent... when certain persons were waiting for independence to stifle the freedom of the church.⁶⁰ Commenting editorially, *Il-Berqa* said that Sandys was as determined as Wilson to include in every constitution an anti-Catholic clause hindering the church from leading the Catholics during election time. The Nationalist propaganda, stating that it was expedient to form a constitution now whilst the Conservative Government was in power in England, vanished into thin air. Both Sandys and Wilson spoke in favour of a Maltese lay-socialist minority which was taking advantage of Borg Olivier's independence to rebel against the Catholic Church.⁶¹ Borg Olivier did not need to make use of the 'trusted friend' because he wanted to snatch the vote from those who were against independence, editorialised *Il-Berqa*.⁶² The

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 Apr. 1964.

⁵⁹ *Il-Haddiem*, 13 Apr. 1964. This was a more modern style tabloid published by the Young Christian Workers.

⁶⁰ *Il-Berqa*, 16 Mar. 1964.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19 Mar. 1964.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 20 Mar. 1964. On the 'trusted friend', see above, p. 227.



An anti-independence cartoon depicting the referendum question as a snare.

Nationalists were playing into the hands of the Socialists...⁶³ A referendum with a twisted question could only be defended by twisted arguments.⁶⁴ A budget with a deficit of £1 m, it editorialised, was not suitable propaganda for the Nationalists' independence referendum.⁶⁵

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1964.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 Mar. 1964.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 Mar. 1964.

According to the MLP organ *Il-Helsien*, "those two absurd clauses" had rendered agreement between the pro-independence parties more difficult: it had made it harder for Sandys to reach a decision and would bring about the postponement of independence.⁶⁶ These clauses had been included in Borg Olivier's constitution after two priests went to London from Malta to give advice. These two clauses destroy all human rights which may be included in the new constitution. These give power to government and the church that whatever they do under the guise of defending religion cannot be regarded as being against human rights. In a word they opened wide the door to fascism.⁶⁷ Borg Olivier had not had the courage to hold fast against the Junta's pressure, as he had indicated (he would do) earlier. After asking Mr Sandys to draw up a democratic Constitution, he changed his mind. The target date of 31st May had been destroyed...⁶⁸ The political meeting which was held on St John's square and the rallies and pilgrimages of reparation organized by the Junta during these last weeks; were a clear indication of how a constitutional struggle could be changed into a religious one, editorialised *Il-Helsien*...⁶⁹ Workers should realise in time that this referendum contained something fishy. Some time ago Borg Olivier had stated that before independence it was not necessary to hold elections or a referendum. He had asked Sandys twice to arbitrate on the constitution. Later he changed his mind and was now holding a referendum on it.⁷⁰ Danny Cremona was again reported as declaring that the Nationalists wanted to include a clause so that those who left Malta would not be able to return... "But we

⁶⁶ *Il-Helsien*, 3 Mar. 1964.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1964. Fr J. Bernard, S. J., was mentioned by name; Fr B. Tonna was not. On this see below, esp. II, 10.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 Mar. 1964.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 Mar. 1964.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 Mar. 1964.

harassed them so much that they had to withdraw it.”⁷¹ Notary Joseph Abela wondered if Borg Olivier wanted independence. All he wanted, he said, was to let the country’s situation deteriorate to a point when the Nationalists would say that to be saved the country would have to integrate with Italy.⁷² Certainly, prophesised Karmnu Zammit approvingly, no independence constitution would be granted without the six points.⁷³ *Il-Helsien* announced that on that day - 11th April - the MLP should have delivered their talk in the referendum series on MTV, but once more they had been denied the opportunity to be heard, for the people “to hear what we have to say on what others are saying about us...” Dr Karmenu Caruana, Minister of Agriculture, Power and Communications, was criticised for having addressed employees during working hours and told them it was their duty to vote.....⁷⁴

In the meantime, the Archbishop and the Prime Minister had been in touch. On 20th April, the day after the ‘neutral’ episcopal circular had been read in the churches, the Prime Minister sent for the UK commissioner. With the Prime Minister were two ministers, Dr Felice and Dr Caruana.

Dr Borg Olivier first inquired how Sandys would be replying to a parliamentary question by Tom Driberg on the following day. There is evidence that the Maltese government had tended to be informed in advance of parliamentary questions tabled in the Commons, particularly perhaps if it was felt that their advice was needed or would be helpful in the drafting of replies. It was also a courtesy; and that would normally be done through an exchange of written

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6 Apr. 1964.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 7 Apr. 1964.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1964.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 Apr. 1964.

communications through the agency of the UK Commission. That, clearly, was not the case now.⁷⁵

Borg Olivier then told Wakefield this: "The Archbishop has informed me that you have told him that the British Government will not grant independence unless 50% of the electorate vote 'yes' in the referendum." Wakefield denied having told Gonzi that. Borg Olivier replied: "I am glad to hear it. I will tell the Archbishop that he is mistaken."

According to Wakefield, he had not in fact mentioned 50%; he had referred to "an inconclusive result". If so, Gonzi may have understood that to mean less than 50%, and conveyed that impression to Borg Olivier. According to Wakefield, however, Gonzi had "promised that he would not pass on to Borg anything I said but he has of course been subject to extreme pressure from Borg and Ministers."

Gonzi also told Borg Olivier that he (Gonzi) had received a letter from someone "high up and in close touch with Mr Sandys" saying that even if the referendum showed a 'yes' majority, the British Government would include Mintoff's six points in the Constitution. To this it seems that Wakefield did not react, as he made no mention of any rejoinder from his side.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Hobden/Cuschieri, 25 Jan. 1964, OPM/857/63, OPM Arch. Castille, in relation to the P.Q.s by the M.P.s S.S. Awbery and P.H.B. Wall, due for oral reply on Tuesday 28th January, and the texts of the replies intended. The Secretary of State duly replied to one question, for instance, that if the MLP desired a UN commission to supervise the referendum or a fresh election they should "make their proposals direct to Dr Borg Olivier." Another P.Q. down for 4th July 1964 concerned a request that a copy of the draft independence constitution for Malta be placed in the library of the House of Commons, to which the suggested (and actual) reply was that this was a confidential document belonging to the Government of Malta and it would not be proper for the Colonial Secretary to make it available to honorary members at the present time. This question was put by Mr Stan Awbery. 'Aide Memoire', attached to Reg Hobden's letter from the UK Commission to Edgar Cuschieri at the OPM, 25th Jan. 1964, *op.cit.*)

Angry at what he regarded as a breach of confidence by Gonzi, Wakefield informed London that he did not propose to see the Archbishop "unless he invites me to see him." His interview with Dr Borg Olivier and Ministers Felice and Caruana had lasted more than an hour. "It was not a happy one."⁷⁶

The letter which Gonzi told Borg Olivier he had received from a confidante of Sandys may have inclined Gonzi to think that it would be better to have a solid Nationalist majority in the referendum to safeguard against undesirable constitutional changes. Equally, it may have rather convinced him that, whatever happened, if independence came, the British were still likely to tamper with the final version of Malta's new constitution. In that case, an inconclusive result might well have the effect of putting independence off for the time being, averting any impending danger to the *status quo* for church and religion. At the time it was sometimes also assumed that if Mintoff lost the next general election in 1966, as he was expected to do, he could be removed from the MLP's leadership. Such a move would then pave the way for a reconciliation with the church; and it would facilitate the MLP's return to power in the election after that, under a new leadership.

It is clear that Wakefield anticipated, and perhaps desired, an inconclusive result from the referendum: "I expect that lacking positive guidance from (the) Church (a) substantial proportion of (the) electorate will abstain or put in blank ballot papers", he had telegraphed Lansdowne after seeing Gonzi on 16th April.⁷⁷ The church had officially pronounced itself without giving a directive to practising Catholics one way or the other (on 19th April). In the light of the government's evident anxiety or suspicion that there was double play at work (implicit in the meeting of 20th April as reported), Wakefield must have felt comforted and reinforced in his

⁷⁶ Tel., Wakefield/Sandys, 20 Apr. 1964, sec., 926/1872/48489.

⁷⁷ See above, pp. 232-233.

assessment of the situation, although he also felt let down by the Maltese archbishop.

The intricacies in a grand design for independence or its alternative were probably above the heads of many ordinary folk. What mattered more was partisan affiliation and trust in the leaders; but religious feelings and the disposition towards the church and hierarchy played a visceral part in all that.⁷⁸ An incredible lot can be achieved with a bare one seat-one vote majority in Malta, however obtained; or even by a Speaker's casting vote.⁷⁹ Changing the existing 'Blood' constitution would normally require a two-thirds majority; this draft constitution was only being approved by the Legislative Assembly for referral to a popular referendum. There was a popular sovereignty tinge to it; the final say was not that of the MPs.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Steering ahead was partly a question of legitimacy, governability and political expediency. What was in the minds of voters is always difficult to know exactly. In a small, tightly-packed and insular communal society, the tendency 'to get away with it regardless' has probably also had much to do with a customary deference to raw power, the sway of hierarchy over merit and of the collective over the individual, inculcated family-oriented partisan leanings which can defy rationality, simultaneously making for an institutionalized oppositional current; and related to that, in-group interest or inward-looking *ad hominem* piques and jealousies as perceived traditionally at the local and parochial levels. Elements of class interest, however interpreted, could not have been far below the surface, but they would have been largely interwoven with partisanship.

⁷⁹ Mintoff's behaviour was later to demonstrate this more forcefully after 1971. With that one seat-one vote he would in the end bring his own side down (in 1998).

⁸⁰ Ganado makes a hue and cry of this, saying the constitutional argument should have been decisive to stop the vote, in which his party and Pellegrini's did not take part, they walked out. Kurunat Attard, a Gozitan contractor, who had been elected to parliament in 1962 on an 'anti-independence' platform with Ganado's party before choosing to cross the floor almost instantly to the government side, voted with Borg Olivier, as Ganado could not fail to observe. H. Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, p.418. Ganado says that the two-thirds majority requirement was the same argument used by Borg Olivier when the 1964 constitution was due to be changed into a republican one. True, but he must have forgotten to add that in 1974 there was no referendum about the constitutional changes proposed. These were enacted, admittedly by a two-thirds majority, by the parliament - with Borg Olivier and some other Nationalist MPs voting against.

Typical of this mould of doing politics was a church celebration on the occasion of the feast of St Joseph the Worker on 1st May, which coincided with the MLP-GWU May Day demonstration. One of those who foresaw how this occasion could easily turn into a political manifestation was Mabel Strickland who was not too happy with the dates chosen for the referendum. She exchanged at least two letters with Borg Olivier. He objected to her suggestion that the religious rally at Floriana on the occasion of the feast of St Joseph the Worker, which happened to be the eve of the first polling day, was bound to influence voters. (In other words, he was not prepared to advise the governor to prohibit it, in terms of section 31 of the existing constitution.) In so far as the MLP-GWU *défilé* was concerned, he reminded Strickland that the Referendum Act 1964 prohibited political meetings and demonstrations "only on the days fixed for polling". Borg Olivier had told her that independence was not an issue "that impinges on faith and morals" - a rehash of what the bishops had said in their referendum circular.⁸¹ The smaller parties would have liked nothing better than to drive a wedge in between the P.N. and the church in the mind of the electorate; they were afraid that their votes could be snatched away by the largest party. On the eve of polling day, Borg Olivier was answering to three libel suits instituted against him by Ganado, Pellegrini and Strickland over allegedly incriminating words he had used in their regard during a broadcast.⁸² On its part, the PN left no stone unturned to depict itself as the bulwark of Catholicism in Malta. Still, it is very doubtful how far the would-be result depended on what happened on the day before the polling opened. The campaign had been going on for months. Minds were already set by then. All the parties had made their views known publicly, vociferously and insistently.

Voters turned out in earnest on 2nd May in 337 polling places spread around the Maltese Islands. The highest number of unclaimed

⁸¹ See her draft, initialled on 21 Apr. 1964, as a follow-up to her letter of 14th April "about the dates of the forthcoming Referendum", enc. OPM Arch. Cast.

⁸² See the law court reports, *Times of Malta*, 2 May 1964, pp. 1-2.

notices to voters by those registered as voters were in the Valletta and Sliema districts, 5.65% in the former (1,007) and 5.36% in the latter (1,019). In all, 3.74% of the registered voters for various reasons had not claimed their votes. The poll was held on the three specified days between 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. The poll ceased on Monday 4th May at 7 p.m.

In all, nearly 80% (79.67%) of the total number of registered voters went to the polls. If however those who had not claimed their notice to voters were excluded, and among them were hundreds who had simply passed away since the last register had been taken, as many as 82.66% of those entitled to vote went to the polls. In terms of figures, this means that 129,649 out of 156, 844 went to the polls. Of these, 84,395 were females and 72,449 were males, with the lowest percentage being, as usual, on the island of Gozo (68.5%). The final count, published on 6th May, gave the following result:

YES: 65, 714;
NO: 54, 919;
INVALID: 9, 016.

The number of those who abstained was 27,238, compared to 14, 474 in the 1962 general election (which had recorded the highest percentage of people voting ever).⁸³ This means that about half of those who abstained had done so with political intent, in compliance with party directives or individual opinions. If so, those who had invalidated their vote or 'voted' by purposely abstaining, because they did not want independence yet or at all, amounted at most to some 22, 000. This represented about 14% of the electorate. Those who had voted in favour, by comparison (65, 714) amounted to about 42% of the electorate. Those who had voted against (54, 919) came to about 35%.

⁸³ For detailed breakdowns per electoral division, etc., see the Principal Electoral Officer's stencilled report to the Prime Minister, 'Report on the Referendum, 1964', ff. 14, plus appendices, OPM Arch., Castille.



Mr Mintoff and Mr E. Attard Bezzina (MLP) in the counting hall (above), and (below) well-wishers cheerfully greet Dr Borg Olivier as the results are announced.





Borg Olivier waiting for Sandys to call him about the referendum results.

It was possible that among those who voted in favour there were some who may not have preferred independence immediately but, seeing that it was to come, preferred the constitution on offer. Similarly, those who voted against, might have included some people who were opposed to immediate independence rather than to the constitution as such. But this is even less likely. The percentages *grosso modo* reflected the strength of the parties at the 1962 general election. There was no noticeable swing one way or the other, except that clearly there was no swing to the anti-Independence vote at all.

The 'two majorities' reared their head once again. If those voting 'yes' and 'no' were to be taken to support the PN and the MLP, both of which advocated immediate independence, the percentage would go up to 77%. If those consciously abstaining or spoiling their votes

belonged to the 'church' parties, it would mean that those broadly supporting the proposed constitution would go up to 66%. *Prima facie*, both combinations could thus be said to have two-thirds support - for Independence, and for the Constitution - but when taken apart these combinations were far from uniform, of course.

In terms of sheer figures, there were a relative majority of 10, 795 'yeses' over 'noes'. There was also a relative majority of 1, 779 of 'yeses' over the 'noes' and the 'invalids' counted together. And then there was the boycott, which was not too impressive. In the 1956 referendum on Integration, in which the PN in opposition had called for a boycott, in a smaller electorate the total number of abstentions recorded was 59, 921. Of all those voting then, 67,607 or some 44% had opted for the MLP's policy of Integration with Britain, which still did not come through. There were then other variables which did not depend on the referendum result, as there were again now.

So, what was new? Where did the referendum leave Malta's Independence and her Constitution? In declaring that he had "no responsibility for the conduct of the referendum or for the choice of the question to be put to the electors" on 7th April, Sandys had nonetheless reiterated that he would do his best to assess from the results the wishes of the Maltese people, and he would have observers to assist him.⁸⁴ He was also on record having said, on 24th April, that if the referendum produced "a decisive affirmative vote" they would "proceed at once with the grant of independence on the lines framed by the Malta Government, with such amendments as the British Government may think it necessary to make after further consultation with the Prime Minister of Malta..."⁸⁵

Commenting on the BBC's Overseas Service about the referendum, Michael Jacobson said that this had produced a result which placed

⁸⁴ Hansard, Commons, 7 Apr. 1964, cols. 189-190.

⁸⁵ Hansard, Commons, 24 Apr. 1964, cols. 213-214.

the whole problem "firmly back into Britain's lap." As many people had anticipated, if not feared, the voting largely reflected the previous pattern between the island's two main political groupings. The inspired British commentator added that


although the Prime Minister won a 10,000 majority, this margin in an electorate of more than 160,000 may not be conclusive enough to permit his draft Constitution to be introduced as it stands. Some compromises will still be necessary to meet the Opposition parties' objections - at least, that is thought likely to be the advice which will be given back in London by the team of six experts who were sent out to watch over the poll.....

The position was further confused, Jacobson told his audience, by the fact that Malta's three minority parties instructed their followers to boycott the referendum. This was reflected in the extremely high number of abstentions - well over 30,000, most of them evidently deliberate. The upshot is that Mr Sandys will have to make his own decisions about the Constitution, and it seems likely that he will be obliged to produce an amended form which, in taking note of all the shades of opinion, succeeds in giving complete satisfaction to none of them.

The more fundamental issue was religion:

The church has always had an exceptionally strong influence in Maltese affairs, and Dr Borg Olivier wants the Constitution to safeguard its role. Mr Minto, on the contrary, demands constitutional clauses against the Church's exercise of political influence.

Although there may have been individuals who had their own ideas about this, the BBC's commentator's allegation that it was noteworthy that many members of the three minority parties, although staunchly Roman Catholics, also came out in favour of limiting the clergy's political power, was basically unfounded. The opposite was true. The point he emphasised was that despite the Nationalists'

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Dr Ragonesi's protest telegramme to the BBC.

majority, "the strength of opposition will have to be taken into account in any new constitutional proposals."

Archbishop Gonzi was credited with having done his best "to ensure a fair vote": before the poll he issued "a decree" declaring that the referendum was a political issue and the Church must not intervene. However, there were reports that the Archbishop's orders were "not fully observed by all priests at the local level."

This problem will be by far the hardest nut for Mr Sandys to crack. So far, one of the most optimistic signs for Malta's future had been that, despite the deadlock, the islanders

have avoided a repetition of the violence of six years ago. We can only hope that they continue to do so.⁸⁶

Jacobson also dropped a hint, which seemed only logical, that in the circumstances the date originally set for Malta's independence- "the 31st of this month" - might have to be postponed.

The reaction to the BBC commentary from the Office of the Prime Minister at the Auberge d'Aragon was immediate. In a letter to the Controller of the BBC Overseas Service, Mr D.M. Hodson, Dr Borg Olivier's public relations secretary Ragonesi wrote to clarify or contradict a number of points.

First, the team of six experts were asked by Sandys to report on whether the referendum was held under free and fair conditions, as noted in a joint Sandys-Borg Olivier statement on 15th March. The experts therefore "are not expected to tender advice on whether 'some compromises will still be necessary to meet the opposition parties' objections', as this would go beyond their terms of reference.'

Second, 82.7% of those entitled to vote had gone to the polls. This was considered high by all standards. In the six elections since 1947, as many as 90% had voted in 1962, which was exceptionally high; the average for the other five general elections stood at 77%. In the Integration referendum held in 1956, 60% voted. The assertion, therefore, that "the position was further confused by the fact that Malta's three minority parties instructed their followers to boycott the referendum. This was reflected in the extremely high number of abstentions", was neither substantiated by fact nor by practice.

Third:

The Church in Malta has never exercised any 'political' influence. The draft independence constitution prepared by

⁸⁶ "COMMENTARY - 'The Malta Referendum", by Michael D. Jacobson. Producer: Michael Sumner; Wednesday 6th May 1964 1109 GMT", enc. Hodson/Ragonesi, 7 May 1964, OPM Arch. Castille.

the Malta Government ensures the continued exercise by the Church of its spiritual functions, whilst Mr Mintoff's amendments are meant to curtail them.

Fourth, none of the members of the three minority parties ever "came out in favour of limiting the clergy's political power." Such power did not exist, "barring the clergy's individual rights, as citizens, to freedom of expression and to vote."

Fifth, in so far as the position of the Church was concerned, "the strength of the opposition" was limited exclusively to the Malta Labour Party, as all the other smaller parties had informed in clear terms the British Government that they were against the insertion in any new constitution of any of Mr Mintoff's amendments.

Sixth, it was true that the Archbishop had decreed that the question of independence, as such, was a political matter. Such decree did not preclude priests from expressing an opinion in their personal capacity as citizens. "In point of fact some expressed themselves in favour of the Government's proposals, whilst others advised against same."⁸⁷

Jacobson was right to wonder about a postponement of Malta's independence date, but the postponement would not be indefinite. The two majorities were reasonably clear. There were still problems to thrash out, with the Maltese or if necessary without them. There were also practical and logistical considerations. Negotiations about defence and finance would continue and intensify, as would further attempts at somehow resolving the church question in the constitution. As for the referendum result itself, all sides claimed victory. In a *machismo* taunt, the London *Times* said the referendum had given "a Maltese answer": everybody won.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ragonesi/Hodson, 11 May 1964, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ On this see also Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, p. 423. Naturally, the 'centre' parties had won too. More people had voted against, blank, spoiled their ballots or not gone to the polls than had voted for. Ganado even sliced the PN's tally by 2%, rounding it off to 40%.

Enter the Mediators

THE CHURCH QUESTION

The church question continued to be the greatest stumbling block to the finalisation of an Independence constitution until late in the summer of 1964. The referendum campaign had shown all too evocatively how deep were the rifts between the sanctimonious 'umbrella' church grouping, which commanded an overall majority, and the no less obstreperous Mintoff-led 'socialist' minority. Between February and May Mintoff and Gonzi had literally traded accusations, insinuations and even insults in large public gatherings, arousing tens of thousands of faithful and partisans devoutly to rally to either side. The Archbishop had declared publicly that he and the Maltese clergy would break the law and go to prison if any religiously objectionable constitutional clauses were accepted.

The end of the Malta Independence Conference at Marlborough House had seen a shift in the British position, when Britain decided that she would be granting Malta independence, whether or not the Maltese political parties managed to reach any consensus on the new constitution. A deadline was even set and announced: 31st May 1964. The decision to hold a referendum however had largely

reopened the whole question of Malta's Independence, stopping or at least postponing the plans in hand. What of the result, and how to interpret it?

It had seemed increasingly likely that decisions would have to be of an inter-governmental nature. Although in certain influential circles there continued to be a decided view that it might be better to delay Malta's independence, even to stop it, delays for the most part had been caused by the Maltese parties due to their inability to agree on how, if not whether, Malta should get independence. At the time that the Marlborough House encounter was being planned, some Colonial Office officials were wondering whether it would not be possible to put together a Malta Independence Bill, for presentation to the British parliament, before the Christmas recess - Christmas, 1963. That schedule was ruled out as being too tight; but it was cursorily noted, in these deliberations, that Sandys was of the opinion that independence might become possible by February 1964. Once a decolonization project was in hand, the prevailing feeling at the Colonial Office was that it should be expedited, almost in the French sense of *se débarrasser*; even if for strategic reasons some other ministries may have been far less hurried.

Even so, putting the matter before the Houses of Parliament was not nearly enough. The British Government itself had to feel that it could go along with an Independence constitution which was, and was seen to be, sufficiently democratic, sufficiently liberal. Unless the party in government was itself convinced that the constitution being proposed was broadly acceptable, it would not wish to bring it forward and have to face a barrage of objections from the Labour and Liberal benches, exposing itself to criticism in the British press, and even internally, when backbench MPs could be quite outspoken. Apart from *The New Statesman*, Mintoff had little open support in the British press, particularly in view of his suspicious foreign policy ties. On matters of religion, however, the situation was quite different, linked as these were to individual rights in a civil state. Atheist and agnostic, Anglican and non-conformist, liberal and radical could combine fiercely to oppose any "mediaeval" privileges being granted to - or rather retained by - the Roman Catholic Church.

The history of Roman Catholicism in Britain had been a very different one to that in Malta, which never lived through a Reformation and its resident Inquisitors had not been unduly busy. This Church, however, had been discriminated against in the United Kingdom for centuries, at least until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. Catholics had often been portrayed as popish reactionaries, still then popularly caricatured on 5th November in the annual folk ritual of burning an effigy of Guy Fawkes, a Catholic conspirator in the 'gunpowder plot' of 1605. Ulster Unionists in the British-held northern part of Ireland still celebrated the Battle of the Boyne of 1690 in which James II, a Catholic, had been defeated. Inter-cultural differences in time did not apply only to prejudices against Roman Catholicism, and conversely to Protestantism, in mass culture; they also applied to the *forma mentis* of English Catholics themselves who had long been exposed to an open and lay society. Those who lived through the persecution of old had done so imbued with the courage of their convictions and a sense of fending for themselves rather than depending on state protection for survival or respect, much less privilege. In the second half of the twentieth century, stringent expectations by the Maltese church, such as the outright opposition to equality before the law for herself, or to any legal possibility in Malta of civil marriage for anyone who had been baptised a Catholic at birth, risked raising eyebrows even among English Catholics.

When Harold Wilson rose to speak about the Malta Independence Bill in the House of Commons in July 1964 he remarked that members "on both sides of the House" were concerned about "safeguards for the voter" or the imposition of spiritual sanctions on a political party at election time, as he put it: "comparable and equal to the safeguards which have been written in the Representation of the People Act in this country about undue influence and putting the voter in spiritual jeopardy in the exercise of his vote." To which Sandys replied:

I have very much in mind the question of human rights and liberties... I have made it clear to the House that Parliament here has the last word in these matters. I agree... that the

important thing is to get it right if we can, but I would also like not to have avoidable delay.”¹

Mintoff went out of his way to pander to British susceptibilities in this sensitive domain, to the point of worrying the Electoral Reform Society who, like the Liberal Party, supported the proportional system of voting for Britain as in Malta. This was because in an interview carried by *The Sunday Citizen*, Mintoff had said “the Labour Party of Malta will accept nothing less than the British pattern of democracy”.²

While Malta seemed rather incapsulated in time, other parts of the world had moved on: for better or for worse, these had become far more permissive, and far less credulous. The Maltese argument that they did not have to change or “infect” their customs and beliefs because lifestyles may have changed elsewhere, as in Britain, seemed valid enough in Malta; but that touched a raw nerve when it came to legislating in a parliament that had been moulded quite differently, and which had a public opinion of its own to respond to.

Some *modus vivendi* had to be found. While ensuring that a special place for the Catholic faith and the Church was assured, as Britain anyway had cleverly and conveniently tended to do for generations, it was equally necessary to show that other denominations or indeed citizens would not be discriminated against or harassed because of their religious beliefs or the lack of these. Gonzi and Mintoff were both familiar figures to the British press and public, as a result of the crusading dramas over the past years, which to many in Britain - leftists and liberals as well as Protestants and non-conformists - would have seemed dated, esoteric or downright Guareschian. To those directly concerned, the issues at stake seemed vital, pregnant as they also were with political implications and consequences. In

¹ Hansard, Commons, 17 Mar. 1964, col.1188.

² Lakeman/Sandys, 25 Feb. 1964, 926/1913.

reponse to the mounting pressure not to give in to any of Mintoff's requests, Borg Olivier would not have wanted to seem as if he was distancing himself from the smaller 'church' parties, and consequently from the Church. While disinclined to see the Canon Law and the *status quo* specifically entrenched into the new Maltese constitution, his side tried to think of other ways in which to satisfy the Church's expectations.

The original draft constitutional proposal in article 2 was simply and significantly that the Roman Catholic religion be the established religion of Malta. On the insistence of a jesuit militant, Fr J. Bernard, Ganado and the other small parties had proposed that to this be added a clause guaranteeing that the Church "continue to enjoy all those rights, privileges and prerogatives, in accordance with the laws of Malta and the Code of Canon Law, obtaining on the appointed day". In the political climate of the time and before a referendum on the independence constitution was held, further to ensure the Church's protection the Nationalist side had suggested that two interpretative subsections be added relating to section 48 in the chapter on fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, whereby nothing done by the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of "its spiritual powers or duties" would be held to be in contravention of the provisions in that chapter; nor, similarly, would anything contained in or done "under the authority of any law" for the protection of the Religion of Malta.⁴ Another possibility which the Nationalist endorsed eventually, turned out to be a somewhat looser additional clause which without entrenching the Canon Law constitutionally would guarantee to the Church "the right freely to exercise her proper spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and duties and to manage her own affairs".⁴

In so far as the two exempting clauses would have meant that the Church could flout the constitution in so far as human rights were

³ H. Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 412, 421-422.

⁴ See above, I, 9; and below, III, 16.

concerned, the implications were sinister. Much then would have depended on what “spiritual” meant exactly. Disagreements on interpretation could end up before the courts. Presumably, “spiritual functions or duties” would still comprise the interdict (which in practice was not any different to excommunication) as a “spiritual” sanction. Thus, as a result of the new Constitution, Mintoff and his entourage would not be somehow absolved of the spiritual sanctions they carried or, worse, the bishops held to be in contravention of the Constitution for imposing them, or if they imposed any such sanctions in future. On the other hand, could the church be denied the right to impose “spiritual” sanctions if and as it deemed fit, to ward off perceived antagonists, to guide and instruct its faithful in “a Catholic country”? Was it wrong or immoral for a church to impose a spiritual sanction? Definitions and perceptions of morality were in the eye of the beholder: these debatable exceptional clauses, which could open a Pandora’s box, were unacceptable to the British government in principle. They might well have been found objectionable by the Maltese drafters of the *Dichiarazione dei diritti degli abitanti di Malta e Gozo* in June 1802, formulated in the wake of the French Enlightenment at the time of the Treaty of Amiens, when it seemed that Malta would be reverting to the Order of St John.

It seems that the proposed hardline subsections 10 and 11 for section 48 of the chapter under review were initially disliked by some churchmen as still not quite good enough. Fr Bernard together with Fr Benny Tonna had gone up to London on Dr Ganado’s insistence in July 1963 as unofficial church advisers to advise and mediate on church matters; in February 1964 Gonzi himself accompanied Bernard to London where they had a long meeting with Ganado. Bernard later told a Dutch researcher that these exempting clauses would still “have made the Church subject to the Nationalist Party.”⁵ By which Bernard must have meant that since it was the

⁵ H. Ganado, *op.cit.*, pp. 421-422, 424; Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta*, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

government, not the church, which legislated, therefore “the authority of any law” could still become a matter of dispute, depending on who was in office. However well-intentioned and try as they might, Bernard and Tonna as ecclesiastics could hardly depart from the wishes of the episcopal curia in Valletta, by whose *beneplacito* they went to London. Bernard was involved up to his neck in the politico-religious struggle, taking the stand in Junta mass rallies even during the referendum campaign. Ganado later revealed that it was Bernard who had advised that the ‘Canon Law’ amendment be put forward - one on which at first Ganado himself had not been too keen - and then agreed that it be withdrawn, embarrassing Ganado and his delegation. The two ecclesiastical advisers had held the two exemption clauses to be “the greatest guarantee for religion and the Church in Malta”, according to Ganado. Bernard then changed track and advised instead acceptance of the exemption clauses and then of the somewhat looser arrangement granting full freedom to the Church in the exercise of her duties and the management of her affairs. Why was there this about-turn? It now seems clear that the Maltese ecclesiastical side, including the Archbishop, found out that the Holy See were not at all keen on their hard-line church clauses, even less so was the British Government.⁶ All this was going on behind the scenes.⁷

Others who were no less Catholic, or perhaps less Malta-bound, could the more easily mediate with authority - with a view to sufficiently protecting religion and the church while guarding against inequality and discrimination. As this issue seemed destined to continue simmering and flaring while other initiatives were moving ahead on the economic, industrial, political, social, military and international fronts on the road to Independence, in 1963 third party soundings began with a view to finding a way out of it. One which would be acceptable, if not to the Church in Valletta, at least to the Church in Rome. However, it was not before Sandys had obtained the green light

⁶ Ganado, *op.cit.*, *ibid.*, and see above, I, 9.

⁷ See below, III, 16.

to push on with Independence after the referendum result, in mid-May 1964, that more 'official' diplomatic *démarches* were undertaken with the Holy See through the Foreign Office specifically on settling this question through some agreed formulae.

No sooner had the Malta Independence Conference in July 1963 registered a deadlock than feelers went out and enquiries were initiated to try and secure a more liberal Catholic position. Archbishop Gonzi quickly found out about that, although he reckoned that the Vatican was intervening to prevent the *sitt punti* from being considered. Lobbying was obviously taking place at one time with the more conservative and the more liberal factions in the Holy See. In a personal letter to Duncan Sandys in September, Mabel Strickland let him know what she herself had just been told by Gonzi. "The Archbishop tells me", confided Strickland, "that the question of Malta is under consideration at the Vatican at this moment." She also informed him that Gonzi would be returning to Rome on the 27th September. Very much her father's daughter in this, Mabel would be at the Lansdowne Club in London for a week from 22nd September, before herself leaving for Rome, where she would be staying with Donna Isabella Orsini. Moreover, she had suggested to Borg Olivier, she said, that on his way back from the U.S.A., it might be useful if Sandys saw them "together" on "a vital Church issue."⁸ It does not seem that Sandys took to the idea of a meeting with Mabel, and even less so to one with her and Borg Olivier together. But she was wont to make her presence felt in London, where she was well connected, and kept pressing with letters, reports and passing visits, just like her father used to do.

The "vital Church issue" was civil marriage, one of the Labour Party's 'six points'. Objection to these 'points' motivated the protection which the draft constitution sought to afford to religion and the Church. Sandys had raised a number of questions in this area during the

⁸ Strickland/Sandys, 20 Aug. 1963, 926/1882; "Dear Duncan,.... With best regards to you and Marie Claire."

Malborough House meetings, without making headway. If there was a grave concern, where mediation was required, it was this. The Maltese church was as apprehensive as ever of the prospect that civil marriage, and directly or indirectly divorce, could be introduced into Malta. The non-existence of civil marriage, and the problems associated with mixed marriages, had long been a Maltese problem; much political agitation already in the 1890s had been linked to such issues.⁹ In the British period, it could be traced back to a proclamation in 1828 which recognised the jurisdiction of the local ecclesiastical courts over Roman Catholics in Malta.

Canon Law legislated only for Catholics but, Mabel held:

it must continue in Malta to be also the civil law for them as regards marriage, and the law would not provide for a Catholic, lapsed or otherwise, marrying in Malta in front of a Justice of the Peace. The jurisdiction of the Catholic Church over Catholics continued until death but it does not exercise jurisdiction over others. Marriages contracted outside Malta are valid according to the laws of the country where they are contracted. But in mixed marriages, where one of the parties is a Catholic, the religious ceremony must be followed as well according to Catholic teaching.

She realised that when it came to a Catholic marrying in England in a Registry Office and the husband and wife returning to Malta, the husband refused to pay alimony because the marriage was declared null and void on the Catholic side:

Are the children illegitimate and penalised by this in Malta?
Is this the gap in the Civil Law that is causing trouble?

⁹ See Sir Gerald Strickland's report on the Malta case before the Privy Council in 1893 and the consequent Order-in-Council of 12 Aug. 1895, *enc.*, *ibid.*; see also, e.g., Henry Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, ch. 3.

Should the civil laws of Malta be altered to be in line with the United Kingdom and international laws?

These were very fair questions but Miss Strickland was representative of the general position of the three other non-Socialist parties when she held that such matters were not to be embodied in any Constitution. To attempt to define or entrench any such laws in a Constitution

would result in religious questions being brought before the Constitutional Court or the United Nations in the event of Independence, based on far-reaching distinction and division on the interpretation of Human Rights - vide section 23 (3) of the Draft Constitution as proposed by the Nationalist Party (Cmnd. 2121): 'No person shall be subject to *any disability* or be excluded from holding any office by reason of his religious profession.' It is bad law to put too much into a Constitution.

Her line essentially was against Independence being given: in that case the position which the Church held would be "completely uncovered." Any safeguard in any Independence Constitution, however much entrenched, she concluded with a prophetic twang,

is valueless the moment a dictator usurps power or is elected with a majority of one. The Constitution can be abrogated and the Court dealt with by a dictator using his power to appoint judges. British troops, if here at all, with a Defence Agreement, after Independence would be on foreign soil, not committed to hold the ring in a purely domestic dispute for sovereignty will be Malta's own.¹⁰

¹⁰ Strickland memo, datelined Villa Parisio, Malta, 20 Aug. 1963, and entitled: "Miss Strickland's appreciation of the Position of the Church in Malta with special reference to marriage and its related questions arising out of present-day circumstances; and the Malta Labour Party's challenge to the Nationalist Party's Draft Constitution (Vide amendments presented at Marlborough House Conference, London: 15th July to 1st August, 1963", enc., 926/1882.

Mintoff had been pressing this question of marriages in his campaign for the safeguard of human rights in Malta. He told an MLP mass meeting in June 1963 that if two non-Catholics wanted to get married they would have to go to the UK Commissioner. When Mintoff saw Sandys on 4th June 1963, in Wakefield's presence, he repeated this allegation and said there was no provision in Malta for civil marriages. He added that if two atheists or agnostics wished to get married they would have to go to the UK Commissioner inasmuch as he had inherited the power to perform civil marriage from the old Maltese Imperial Government. "It is not right for a non-Catholic to go to Wakefield to get married", splashed the MLP organ *Il-Helsien*, quoting Mintoff. In fact, the UK Commissioner was only empowered to receive notice of intention of marriage under the provisions of the Foreign Marriage Act, 1892; he could not actually perform a marriage ceremony. Wakefield's deputy in Malta, Ian Watt, confessed that he had to do that once, in Barcelona, "for a weird Maltese who seemed to want to marry an even weirder one in front of the Vice-Consul."¹¹

What was the British Government to make of all this in sorting out an independence constitution for Malta? Advice was sought from Catholic emissaries such as the newly appointed Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, Malta, Gibraltar and Bermuda. Archbishop Hyginus Eugene Cardinale was accredited to Britain in October 1963 and entered the fray immediately. On his own admission Cardinale (who wrote a book in 1976 on *The Holy See and the International Order*) was asked to mediate by the British Government. Cardinale disapproved of the two clauses intended to curtail the application of fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, Maltese church or not. He privately admitted that the British Government's disapproval of Mintoff had not dulled the British sense of fair play to such an extent as to have the 'mother of parliaments' allow Malta's Independence on these conditions. Cardinale held the view that in reflecting the expressed feelings of

¹¹ Watt/Kisch, 7 June 1963, 926/1882.

the Second Vatican Council, the Church could not ignore the human rights universally declared to be inalienably vested in every individual. Consequently, in his view, the Church should not stand upon privileges that would be regarded as infringements upon these rights. He told the Nationalists that exemptions in matters of human rights were dangerous because a future administration could have recourse to such a precedent using it against them.¹² An Italian by birth who had been brought up in Boston and spoke excellent English, Cardinale was reputed to be "a very liberal-minded man" and "one of the coming men in the Catholic hierarchy".¹³

An investigation was undertaken about the status of civil marriage in other Catholic countries, to see what the praxis was. One obvious intermediary for this, through the Foreign Office, was the British Legation to the Holy See. In his 'memoirs' thirteen years later, Cardinale credited himself with the eventual success of the Anglo-Maltese negotiations, in so far as finally a compromise was reached that was more or less acceptable to the three main sides left: the Maltese Government, the British Government and the Catholic Church. It was said at the end of the negotiations, Mgr Cardinale wrote, that the Apostolic Delegate's contribution "made the difference between success and failure of the negotiations."¹⁴

Cardinale was indeed influential.¹⁵ He was the Vatican's man on the spot. When Borg Olivier and his assistant Dr Victor Ragonesi discovered that something was going on behind their backs - they were being portrayed by Sandys as "more Catholic than the Pope" - it was Cardinale whom they tended to suspect. At one point Borg

¹² Koster, *op.cit.*, p. 199, p. 202.

¹³ 'His Excellency Archbishop Cardinale, Apostolic Delegate in the U.K.', enc. Wakefield/Eastwood, 12 Sept. 1964, conf., 926/1920/48583.

¹⁴ Koster, *op.cit.*, p. 203.

¹⁵ Eastwood fully acknowledged this. See below, III, 16.

Olivier suddenly despatched Ragonesi to Rome to find out what was going on.¹⁶ But who was Cardinale after all? Who had selected and appointed him to London, at a time when there was a renewed interest in institutionalizing Anglo-Vatican diplomacy and protocol? Without the nod from superior authority in the Church, how far would Cardinale have stuck his neck out? Someone far more important than the Apostolic Delegate was taking a direct interest in the Malta church question. That was Pope Paul VI, formerly Cardinal Montini, an intellectual who supported the humane 'open door' approach introduced by his predecessor, John XXIII - "*il buon Papa Giovanni*" - who had convened the Second Vatican Council, which Paul VI carried forward.

Cardinale was his main intermediary, but not the only one. Another dignitary who used his good offices with both Whitehall and the Vatican in this tricky question was, we now know, Sir Maurice Dorman. Malta's Governor had an important private audience with the newly elected Pope on 12th November 1963. For half-an-hour he explained to His Holiness, who was all ears, what Malta's problems were. Much of the conversation dwelt on the rift between the Maltese Church and the Maltese Labour Party, which was seen to lie at the base of most of the Island's difficulties at that time.

According to a reliable eyewitness, His Holiness asked anxiously of the relations between the British and "that great, tiny man" the Archbishop (Gonzi). Dorman assured Paul VI that these relations were good and that the last thing Britain wanted was to undermine the influence for good of the Church in Malta, but he did not disguise from His Holiness that the priesthood at lower levels were responsible for a certain share of blame. Saying that he would like "to give thought to the problem", Paul VI asked Dorman, who was not a Catholic, if he could indicate any short review which might give an up to date picture and took note that there had been two or three useful articles in the *Corriere della Sera*. Paul VI also invited Sir

¹⁶ Frendo/Ragonesi interviews, 6th and 27th June 1989; see also Ganado, *op.cit.*, p. 411.

S/S *My last time*
to see *side-lined passages*
of a *Sir M. Dorman's conversation*
~~CONFIDENTIAL.~~ *with the Pope.*

British Legation to the Holy See,

R O M E.

November 15, 1963.

1061/21/63

The Governor of Malta has been our guest for the past few days on his way back from talks in London.

2. He was received on 12th November by the Pope and was able to tell him about the Island's problems for about half an hour. Since the conversation was to be conducted in English, a language in which His Holiness does not feel entirely at home, I was asked in to interpret in case of need. There was little need in the event for Dorman told his story in simple language and it was evident from the Pope's comments that he followed it closely.

3. The conversation dwelt a good deal on the rift between the Maltese Church and the Maltese Labour Party which lies at the base of most of the Island's present difficulties and His Holiness asked anxiously of the relations between us and "that great, tiny man" the Archbishop. Dorman assured him that these were good and that the last thing we wanted was to undermine the influence for good of the Church in Malta, but he did not disguise from His Holiness that the priesthood at lower levels were responsible for a certain share of blame.

4. The Pope said he would like to give thought to the problem. He asked if Dorman could indicate any short review which might give an up to date picture and took note that there had been two or three useful articles in the Corriere della Sera. He also invited Dorman to let him know any specific matters (such as civil marriages) over which he could help. He would gladly do what he could to encourage a more liberal spirit.

5. Altogether the conversation was most encouraging and Dorman will send me some suggestions for consideration by His Holiness when he gets back to base.

E.E. Tomkins Esquire C.M.G., C.V.O.,

Foreign Office,

S.W.1.

In his audience with His Holiness Paul VI on 12th November 1963, Sir Maurice Dorman was asked about "quel grande piccolo uomo", and how could the Pope "encourage a more liberal spirit".

Maurice to let him know any specific matters, such as civil marriages, over which he could help. The Pope “would gladly do what he could to encourage a more liberal spirit.”¹⁷

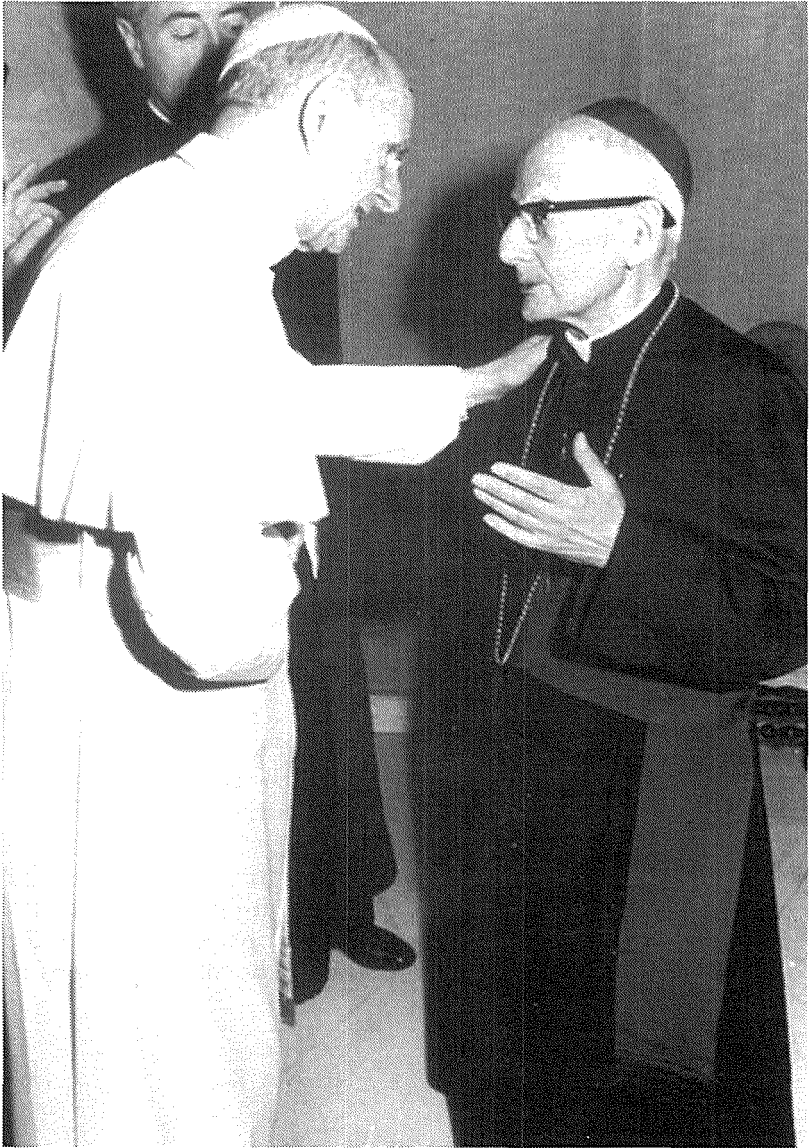
Dorman kept up his link with Paul VI in the strictest confidence, as he had been asked to do, using the British Legation to the Holy See as his interlocutor. Among other things, Dorman promised to produce for Paul VI a note “about the provision for civil marriage which the Government of Malta is thinking of proposing provided that the Holy See will use its influence to reduce opposition from the Maltese clergy.”¹⁸ Once again it seems that the Borg Olivier administration was inclined to be less rigid but was afraid of political flak because of ecclesiastical opposition locally.

The eyewitness in Dorman’s audience with the Pope was Britain’s representative at the Vatican, Sir Peter Scarlett. In this case he was rather more than that: he was acting as an interpreter to the Pope. The conversation was held in English, a language in which His Holiness was said not to feel entirely at home. Dorman evidently could not converse in Italian or in another language better known to the Pope. Scarlett found the conversation “most encouraging”, and reported to the Foreign Office accordingly.

On the day that Dorman met Paul VI, Archbishop Gonzi was also in Rome. That same evening, he had dinner with Dorman at Scarlett’s residence. Dorman, who stopped in Rome on his way back to Malta from London, where he had held talks about the situation, briefed Gonzi on “the latest developments in London”. They had “a long *tête-à-tête*.” Paul VI had met Gonzi - “*quel grande piccolo uomo*” - and taken his measure in more ways than one.

¹⁷ Scarlett/Tomkins, Rome, 15 Nov. 1963, para. 3-4, f. 1, copy of FO despatch on CO 926/1882.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 7, f. 2.



Pope Paul VI with Archbishop Siri.

As if to underline the genuineness of Paul VI's offer to help out, on the following day Mgr Casaroli, the Cardinal Secretary of State, handed Sir Peter Scarlett a not insignificant memorandum about civil marriage in the Catholic world. Following the report about Mintoff's allegation that atheists and agnostics could not marry in Malta, and possibly Mabel Strickland's insistence on the long-standing question of civil marriage and mixed marriages, British diplomacy had been seeking more information about marriage legislation and practices in the Catholic world. Scarlett had first written to Casaroli about this on 27th August 1963, only three weeks after the breakdown of the Malta Independence Conference. More specifically, he had asked for information on how far the Church's privileges in Malta were paralleled elsewhere.

The memorandum provided by the Vatican Secretariat was dated 11th November - *before* Dorman's meeting - but it was only delivered to the Legation afterwards, on the 16th. It held that the position of the Catholic Church in Malta had parallels in other countries and made textual reference to passages from Concordats between the Holy See and the States of Baden, Austria; Bavaria, Germany; Italy, Lithuania, Prussia and Roumania. The documents, which had been published in Rome in 1951, referred to the position of religion and of the Catholic Church and free exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction;¹⁹ the teaching of religion in the State schools and recognition of Catholic schools;²⁰ and also the rights and privileges of the clergy with particular reference to '*privilegium fori*'.²¹

Then followed a long paragraph about 'Marriage'. The legislation in force in Malta faithfully represented Catholic principles and Canon Law, it began. In deference to such principles and in perfect concordance with the Catholic tradition of the Maltese people, no

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Enc. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Enc. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Enc. 3.

other marriage ceremony has ever been recognised in that Island as valid for Catholics than that celebrated in accordance with the laws of the Catholic Church:

A similar position still exists today in other Catholic countries such as Colombia and Spain. This state of affairs has been respected by the British Government ever since it took possession of Malta. It would therefore constitute a grave damage to the conscience of the Maltese people if one wished to insert in the Constitutional law an institution which has always been and still is foreign to its tradition, its education and its history.

This passage could contain a slight hint in the phrase specifying the insertion of civil marriage "in the Constitutional law". Was it advisable to have any such provision in a Constitution, in other words? But a rather stronger hint seems to have found its place in the following paragraph, which was included in parenthesis:

As for the special case of a person baptised and educated in the Catholic Church who does not wish to contract matrimony in the canonical form, it should be noted that in Colombia and Spain, nations which are in a similar position to Malta, the Catholic Church, while maintaining its own principles as regards canon law, has shown itself disposed to find a practical way out which has permitted the Governments to regulate matters through the civil law.

Finally there is a short comment on 'Cemeteries', referring to the MLP's hurt that those interdicted by the Church were buried like outcasts in the non-consecrated part of the Addolorata cemetery, which was actually a public cemetery - in what was all too unkindly known to Maltese at the popular level as "il-miżbla" (literally, the rubbish dump). Again one has to weigh the Vatican's wording:

These are ecclesiastical property in some States, for example Colombia (article XV of the Concordat of 20th July 1892); in others on the other hand they are public property. The

State by suitable legislation looks after their maintenance and safeguards their sacred and inviolable character in agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities.

Once again here there could be a muted hint as to the importance of respecting human dignity in properly maintained burial grounds, the "sacred and inviolable character" of which had to be safeguarded in a general way.²²

In the meantime the Foreign Office had conducted their own investigation and concluded that there did not seem to be any country, where the predominant religion was Roman Catholic, which made "no provision for the valid marriage of persons who do not profess any religion." In the case of Spain, however, the facilities for civil marriage were restricted to those persons who were able to prove, to the satisfaction of the ecclesiastical authorities, that they have never been baptized in the Roman Catholic faith. In Italy, the local law required either a civil marriage at a town hall, or a Roman Catholic marriage which had to be registered by the civil authority.

In Portugal, a 1940 law held that marriages could be contracted in the presence of the officials of the civil registry, subject to the conditions and according to the procedure established in civil law *or* before the ministers of the Catholic Church in harmony with canon law. Marriage in accordance with canon law had full civil effect if the Church register entry were transcribed in the civil records. In the Republic of San Marino, the local law required civil marriage. In Spain, the civil code accepted two types of marriage: that in accordance with the Canon Law, which was the only form available to members of the Roman Catholic Church, that is all those baptised in accordance with Catholic rites; and the civil one, which was available only to those who were able to produce documents to show that they were not Catholics.

²² Enc., 11 Nov. 1963, Scarlett/Tomkins, 15 Nov. 1963, CO 926/1882.

In Latin America, civil marriage was available and in fact required by local law in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay and Venezuela. In Colombia, the local law required civil marriage but Roman Catholics in addition must have a church ceremony. In Guatemala and Haiti the position was obscure but in Panama the local law required civil marriage or marriage performed "in accordance with the rites of the Catholic faith or of any other faith which has legally recognised representatives in Panama." The Foreign Office enquiry made no specific reference to the neighbouring Irish Republic, other than to say that it was understood that the law there too provided for civil marriage.²³

After the referendum result, and just before a high level decision to go ahead with Independence was taken, the Colonial Office briefed the Foreign Office in detail about the Malta situation, especially with regard to the church question. The main object of this exchange was to see whether it would be effective for (British) Ministers "to seek the Vatican support in bringing pressure on the Archbishop". "Following the Malta referendum we are now reaching a difficult and very delicate stage on the thorny path to Maltese independence", the secret *communiqué* began.

Although the result of the referendum was not very conclusive, largely because the question asked was ambiguous, it could certainly not be inferred that the majority did not favour independence, and it could be inferred that the majority favoured the Church safeguards included in Borg Olivier's draft constitution. In these circumstances, wrote Kisch,

my Secretary of State is proposing to accept Borg Olivier's constitution with two important reservations. The first is that Section 48(10) and (11), which say that nothing done

²³ Enc. 'Memorandum', enc. Iley/Davis, 4 July 1963, CO 926/1882.

by the Church in the exercise of its spiritual powers shall be held to contravene the Human Rights chapter, be omitted. The second is that the Maltese electoral law should be amended to bring it precisely into line with the British Representation of the People's Act, so that it will be an offence to inflict or threaten to inflict any temporal or spiritual injury on any person to induce or compel them to vote or refrain from voting.

It was the second of these amendments which could cause very grave difficulty, "particularly as during the referendum campaign Borg Olivier guaranteed that nothing would be altered that was not acceptable to the Church". What the Secretary of State was proposing - right then Sandys was in Aden - was that these amendments should either be approved by the majority of the Maltese Parliament or by a majority of votes in a further referendum. Either course, it was expected, would be resisted by Borg Olivier who had been invited over for talks immediately after Whitsun. In the view of Kisch,

Borg Olivier's attitude will be simply determined by the attitude of Archbishop Gonzi, and the question arises, as it has arisen before, whether anything can be done to persuade the Archbishop to take a reasonable view.

The British Government were extremely loath to become involved in the relation of Church and State in Malta but the fact was that Parliament would have to approve the Independence Bill for Malta with reference to the independence constitution. It would not be possible to get the Bill through Parliament "without securing the voters against spiritual intimidation". Kisch did not think anybody believed that this would make any real difference to what actually happened at elections. In theory, positions might be brought before the Maltese Courts but in fact any such complaints were almost certain to arise from conversations in the confessional. That was not something which it would be possible for the Courts to deal with because the priest would of course refuse to give evidence.

Sandys did not intend to modify any of the other proposals affecting the position of the Church apart from the waiver of Human Rights, which was something the C.O. thought the Archbishop and the Malta Government would accept reluctantly, "bearing in mind that this exemption did not feature in the draft Constitution originally put forward by the Malta Government at the Independence Conference last July".

Although Gonzi instructed the Church to refrain from putting spiritual pressure on voters at the referendum, there were individual priests who did not obey these instructions. One case where the sacraments had been withdrawn was given a good deal of publicity on I.T.V. in Britain. This interference with voters in Malta was well known in Parliament and to the British public "and cannot but be regarded here as a scandal against which an independence constitution must make provision". On the other hand, as Sandys felt that these were matters which were far better dealt with by the Maltese people, it was not intended to entrench the electoral law in the Constitution. This meant that, after Malta became independent, it would be possible for the Maltese Parliament to amend the Constitution, if they really wished to do so, by a simple majority only.

On the following day, Thursday 14th May, Sandys would be back from Aden and would be considering the position, which was being discussed by the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee on that day.

Meanwhile, we will be very grateful if you could inform Scarlet of the position and seek his views on whether, if Ministers wish to seek the Vatican support in bringing pressure on the Archbishop, this would be likely to achieve any positive result. We have in mind, of course, the fact that the Pope himself has shown considerable interest, and if he were prepared to help in an endeavour to remove this stumbling block, which we imagine must be embarrassing to him also, that would be an enormous help.²⁴

²⁴ Kisch/Ledwidge, 13 May 1964, sec., 926/1819.

A cable went out from the F.O. to Scarlet immediately paraphrasing the situation, and adding that if no agreement could be reached with Borg Olivier when he was due to return to London for talks immediately after Whitsun "it may be necessary to postpone Malta's independence until after the next general election in Malta".²⁵

Scarlett phoned the F.O. there and then, and, still on the same day, the F.O. responded with their advice: "the Vatican were displaying interest in Malta". Scarlett thought he might shortly be summoned to an interview. At the same time the British embassy in Rome had been provided with a brief on Malta and on the strength of this they had just spoken to the Italian Foreign Ministry. The F.O. did not object in principle to Sandys taking up this question with the Apostolic Delegate, but

it should be borne in mind that to discuss a matter of political substance with him would create a precedent. He has no diplomatic status in this country and, as far as we know, no secure means of communication with the Vatican. We consider, therefore, that any formal approach on which Ministers decide should be made by our Minister (Mr R. A. Butler) to the Vatican, whether or not something is also said informally to Archbishop Cardinale.²⁶

Between now and mid-June 1964 there were several exchanges, references to the Italian electoral law of 1957 (especially article 98) and suggested modifications thereof, various meetings, a dozen drafts and re-drafts of the controversial clauses, discarding this and inserting that. There was on at least one occasion a personal minute from the Pope himself to his Chancellery to the effect that "Her

²⁵ Tel., 14 May 1964, sec., 926/1819. It was copied i.a. to Rome and the UK Delegation to NATO.

²⁶ Ledwidge/Kisch, 14 May 1964, sec., 926/1819.



The Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr Iginio Cardinale, who mediated between the various parties and factions in London, Rome and Valletta.

Majesty's Government must be deeply concerned lest Malta should drift too far to the left and that his staff should be ready with constructive suggestions if consulted".²⁷

On file, amidst these exchanges, was a copy of the Resolution of the Maltese People "gathered in their thousands at Cospicua, today, March 15, 1964" stating that the British Government were not in a position "to propose and much less to impose" limitations on the freedom of the Catholic Church in the exercise of her mission in the guidance of the individual and collective conscience, religious

²⁷ Scarlett/Butler, tel., 16 May 1964, sec., 926/1819.

education and the moral standards of a Catholic country. Unconditional support was being given to the Hierarchy and Clergy in their stand regarding "the anti-Catholic clauses proposed by the Malta Labour Party" which if embodied in the new Constitution would be resisted "effectively by all legitimate means, each and every one of these clauses...". These clauses, the Resolution went on, had been unanimously rejected by all the other political parties during the Malta Independence Conference in July 1963; they exceeded "the mandate given to the Malta Labour Party by its own electorate" and hence such clauses should not be embodied in a permanent Constitution when the present position was "only a transitory phase in the history of the Maltese People..."²⁸

Whether officially or unofficially, productive meetings were held between Sandys and Cardinale, and on at least one occasion Scarlett with them. On Borg Olivier's initiative there was at least one direct encounter between Cardinale and Borg Olivier, on 8th June, 1964. Cardinale had been "depressed" to find how rigid his attitude was. He would now "see him again before our Ministers see him to prepare him for what was coming", said a F.O. telegram to the Holy See.²⁹ Borg Olivier took a rigid line especially with regard to changing the Maltese electoral law. By mid-June the exemption clauses (Section 48(10) and 11) had been thrown out, an anti-discrimination clause introduced for insertion before Section 47, and moreover, the Order in Council enacting the new Constitution was to include the following provision: Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, Section 54 of the Electoral (Polling) Ordinance of Malta shall have effect as if the words "material or moral" were omitted and as if there were inserted after the word "loss" the words "of any kind". The proposed Order would also and

²⁸ The Resolution was forwarded to Gonzi, Douglas-Home, Sandys, Dorman, Borg Olivier, Felice, "The Hon. Leaders of the Political Parties loyal to the Church", the press and the Speaker of the House of Commons; enc. 926/1819.

²⁹ Tel. 35, 10 June 1964, conf., 926/1818-1819.

provide that the above provision would not be capable of amendment until after the next General Election and then only by law passed by a two-thirds majority. Briefly, this meant that both the phrases "moral and material" and "temporal and spiritual" had been left out; essentially it meant that the Church could not on political or moral grounds spiritually threaten, sanction, interdict or excommunicate anyone in public life especially at election time.

From letters sent by Sandys and Eastwood to Cardinale it seems clear that the Vatican had agreed, verbally if not in writing, to these draft proposals as finalised.³⁰ In a subsequent letter on official note-paper Cardinale confirmed that throughout their recent discussions he had been careful to inform the Holy See of the amendments and alterations under considerations. The proposals accompanying Eastwood's note to him of 26th June 1964 had been made known to the Holy See. In confirmation of his verbal communication to Eastwood Cardinale was "authorized to state that these proposals are considered acceptable in present circumstances by the authorities of the Catholic Church."³¹

On 26th June Borg Olivier told Lansdowne in a telephone call that he was accepting the omission of Section 48 (10) and (11). This was taken to mean that moreover he was not objecting to the inclusion of a general non-discrimination clause. Borg Olivier also told Lansdowne however that he would not accept having the Maltese Electoral Law changed by an Order-in-Council.

Sandys regarded an alteration on the lines proposed (by the British Government with the concurrence of the Vatican) as pretty well essential to get the Independence Bill through the Houses of

³⁰ Sandys/Cardinale, 18 June 1964; Eastwood/Cardinale, 26 June 1964, 926/1818-1819. Cardinale had been fully supplied with the relevant documentation by the C.O., including the Malta Electoral (Polling) Ordinance (section 54 on page 20), encs., Eastwood/Cardinale, 29 May 1964, 926/1819.

³¹ Cardinale/Sandys, 30 June 1964, 926/1818-1819.

Parliament; it was one of the points on which Mintoff insisted and there might well be "quite a lot of feeling in favour of it" in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, Eastwood told his counterpart W.B.J. Ledwidge at the F.O.,

Dr Borg Olivier "guaranteed" to his people before the referendum that this alteration would not be made. He had of course no right to give any such guarantee but he now feels that his political reputation is involved. What the conclusion will be I do not know but it cannot be long delayed...³²

Apart from other pending and still unresolved matters of concern, here was a kernel which could ultimately make or break an understanding - and an Independence Bill's passage through the Commons and the Lords. The British knew that; the Maltese must have known it too. For the smaller parties, such a blockage would have been grist to their mill: no agreement, no Independence. Wait for the next general election in 1966. For the larger parties who were committed to Independence, it would have necessitated other justifications: 'clericalism', 'obscurantism' and 'human rights'; 'imperialism', 'imposition' and 'obstruction'.

³² Eastwood/Ledwidge, 26 June 1964, 926/1818-1819.

PART II

OPTIONS AND PROSPECTS

Red Carpet and Red Herring

THE PROSPECTS FOR AN AMERICAN BASE

After the Malta Independence Conference had ended as it did, Borg Olivier had shown no particular eagerness to go back to the other parties for further consultations, although he did have one inconclusive meeting with Mintoff. He made plans to visit the U.S.A. in early September 1963, where he had meetings arranged at the highest possible levels. He did not summon Parliament after the summer recess - and the failed July talks - to resume discussions on the Independence Constitution. When Parliament was due to reassemble on 2nd September, he prorogued it - until after his return from the U.S.A. On his way back, however, he planned to stop in London for more meetings at the Colonial Office.

Assuming that the parties had had their say and there was nothing very new to bring up, Borg Olivier chose instead to steal the limelight in Malta through meetings with President J. F. Kennedy, with Dean Rusk, the U.S. Secretary of State, and with U Thant, the UN Secretary General, among others. Such a round of encounters in the West by a colonial premier from an island with a population of less than 330,000 was somewhat unusual. It was a 'first' for Malta;

and it would not have happened without the assumption that Malta would soon be joining the international community of nations as an independent state in her own right. Perhaps Borg Olivier intended it as a foretaste of Independence, a grand overture to assuage the doubting Thomases 'back home'.

As was reported in various sections of the press especially in Malta, in Washington Borg Olivier concluded a loan to Malta of \$7,500,000 (£2,680,000) from the World Bank, alias the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This was intended mainly for the construction of an electric power plant and an installation for distilling fresh water from the sea. Consisting of 25,000 kilowatts, this project would double Malta's electric power potential while the accompanying project would be able to distill 1,000,000 imperial gallons of water daily.¹ He met bankers and businessmen in different cities, and was feted in customary style by the Maltese migrant communities in New York and in Detroit, where the largest concentrations of Maltese-Americans were located. Photographs of the Maltese premier with the American president, and other dignitaries whom he met, were given prominence in Maltese papers.²

What was the real purpose of this visit? The UK Commissioner in Malta, Sir Edward Wakefield, reported that the signing of the loan "could easily have been done by an official of the British Embassy".³ More pointedly, the Colonial Attache' at the British Embassy in Washington, John Hennings, observed that "the signature of the loan agreement was no more than a formality and has upon every known occasion heretofore been undertaken by a member of this Embassy invested with the necessary powers by the

¹ "Borg Olivier dwar il-possibilita' ta' Bazi tal-Polaris f'Malta", *L-Orizzont*, 12 Sept. 1963, p.1.

² "Prime Minister confers with President Kennedy", *Times of Malta*, 11 Sept. 1963, p.1.

³ Int. rep., 7 Aug. - 5 Sept. 1963, sec., f. 1, 926/1822/48655.

beneficiary government." To his mind, therefore, "the decision of the Government of Malta to send its Prime Minister to perform this duty suggested that signature of the loan was no more than a convenient peg upon which to hang a visit to this country which might generate some useful publicity for Dr Olivier and for Malta."⁴

What eluded these British commentators was the simple fact that Borg Olivier preferred, at this stage, not to have the British embassy in Washington sign the loan on Malta's behalf: he wanted to do it himself. It was also an opportunity for him to fish in American waters, to find out whether any financial help in the form of overseas aid or investment might be forthcoming from there. There was potentially a growing American connection in Malta, which could be better tapped upon Independence. The Headquarters of Allied Forces Mediterranean (HAFMed) was next door to Wakefield's office in Floriana. There was the Hilton Hotel project in St Julian's. There was also vague talk of a American polaris submarine base and/or an American tropospheric scatter station in Malta.

For many years Maltese harbours had headquartered the British Mediterranean Fleet, as well as repaired and serviced it whenever necessary. As British naval power declined this was increasingly supplanted by American clout, even in the Mediterranean, where there now was the significant presence of the American 6th Fleet countering a growing Russian naval presence.

No reference was made in despatches to earlier tensions in Maltese-American relations dating back to the 1950s under the Borg Olivier and Mintoff administrations. In a parliamentary debate in February 1958 in which the main speakers were Mintoff and Borg Olivier, it was asserted more than once that Maltese-American relations were being hampered by the fact that Malta was a colonial possession and no direct talks were possible between Malta and the

⁴ Hennings/Kisch, conf., 4 Oct. 1963, 926/1915/48583.

U.S.A. Although Marshall Aid was not specifically mentioned, Maltese leaders especially Mintoff whose party was in office in the later 1940s, were still sore at having had that withheld from them on the ground that War Damage funds would be an exclusive British responsibility, Malta being a British possession.

Although in 1951 the Governor had given the MLP an assurance that there was no intention to establish an American base, Mr Mintoff claimed, on the same day he had informed the then Prime Minister, Dr Borg Olivier, that about 250 American airmen would be temporarily located in Malta for training purposes. On 19th October 1951 Borg Olivier had stated that this temporary arrangement did not imply the establishment of an American air base. The MLP, Mintoff added, had taken up the matter both with the Colonial Secretary and American Embassy in London, and “pressed the United States Government to aid Malta economically in return for their use of Malta as a base”. In January 1952 the Borg Olivier administration had made a claim to the British Government for an adequate *quid pro quo* and for the provision of a special agreement governing the basing of American Forces in Malta. “Thus finally”, Mintoff told the Assembly, “the Maltese Opposition and Government had *de facto* adhered to a common policy”.

When at the beginning of 1953 the Mediterranean NATO Command Headquarters was established in Malta, this gave rise to the grant of certain privileges to locally stationed members of NATO Forces. The Borg Olivier-Boffa Coalition Government had put up a stiff resistance to the grant of these privileges but no agreement was reached and on 2nd March 1955 the Governor enacted an Ordinance for the grant of these privileges which allegedly went beyond even those granted to British Servicemen. These privileges included (customary) duty free facilities for the importation of certain goods, including a number of cars, referred to by Mintoff as a financial loss to the Maltese Government. A similar facility was granted to members of the US Naval Air Squadron at Hal Far. Such a concession would have put American personnel “in a more advantageous position than British Servicemen whose Government

had finally conceded to make a substantial financial contribution towards Malta's economic recovery", Mintoff recalled, addressing the Malta Legislative Assembly. The Maltese Government could not therefore see their way to granting to the Americans the same concessions enjoyed by members of the British Forces.

In addition to the all too evident attempt to extract an American financial contribution for such services as were being provided by Malta, the Maltese Government was also annoyed by the McCarran Act, which had practically closed the door to Maltese migrants and was preventing some 500 wives and children and 4,400 other relatives from joining their kinsmen in the U.S.A.⁵ Three memoranda handed to the US Secretary of State Mr Foster Dulles in March, 1956, had urged the US Government to give serious consideration to the emigration quotas for Malta, the desirability that American firms establish factories to help industrial development, and that Malta participate in the allocation of surplus commodities from the U.S.A., particularly wheat, to reduce the cost of living. However, Mintoff said, in the course of discussions American representatives held that the stationing of forces was a matter of common necessity "and went so far as to consider that in basing their forces in Malta, the U.S.A. was doing Malta a favour". The Maltese Government wanted tripartite talks - British-American-Maltese - to sort out all these issues, but these never materialised, although Malta had extended the duty free car importation licence (*sic*). When the Mintoff administration requested that copies of the Anglo-American correspondence be passed on to it, "the Maltese Government were informed that as from July, 15 the whole of the Naval Air Squadron, together with the American facilities concerned, would be leaving Malta". When, he said, the British had eventually proposed tripartite talks, the US Government had replied, through

⁵ The McCarran Act restricted emigration from Malta to a quota of 100 per annum, and an attempt to have that doubled failed to make it through the American parliament. On Borg Olivier's concern about this matter see below; on emigration, see also II, 15.

a letter dated 2nd October 1957 which he read out, that they were trying to somewhat improve the Maltese emigration quota to the U.S.A., and as for economic assistance, “when its forces were stationed abroad as part of the collective defence effort, no obligation was created toward the host country or toward the local government”. The US Government had granted \$2,000,000 for an electric power station in Malta which was opened in 1953, and through the CARE programme it had provided foodstuffs valued at several million dollars:

The current CARE program which may be continued next year if the British and Maltese governments so desire, included such agricultural products as rice, cheese and flour exceeding \$610,000 in value. Since the U.S. Navy’s arrival in Malta some four years ago, about \$700,000 has been spent locally on construction work, and expenditures for local supplies and services have reached the total of well over \$1,000,000.

In the light of the above, the United States Government considered that no useful purpose would be served by its participation in the proposed tripartite talks.

While continuing to insist on adequate compensation “in an area daily becoming to them strategically more important”, commensurate with “the services our Islands have rendered to the survival of the Western bloc”, Mintoff noted that as early as 1956 the US Government had made arrangements for a US air base to be set up in Sicily to replace their facilities in Malta.⁶

Borg Olivier was of course fully *au courant* with this past in Maltese-American relations. He could hardly be blamed for grasping the opportunity to find out some more at first hand and to see what, if

⁶ See Mintoff’s statement on ‘American Forces in Malta’ made to the Malta Legislative Assembly, 17 Feb. 1958, and the ensuing interventions by Borg Olivier.

anything, he might be able to salvage from the wreckage, now that Malta would be less dependent on third parties.

In New York there was not only the World Bank, for the signature of a loan, but also the United Nations Headquarters, where Malta expected to sit soon. And there were the Maltese settlers, whose numbers could be boosted if the American quota were liberalized. The assumption that Borg Olivier's mission to the U.S.A. was nothing but a publicity stunt is simplistic and disparaging, unless it implied a slight: why him and not us, as in the good old days?

Wakefield knew better than that. Borg Olivier having asked for Britain's good offices in helping to set up his meetings with American politicians, the UK Commissioner in Malta reported to London supportively, saying that Borg Olivier had asked that on his first visit to the U.S.A. the British embassy in Washington "hold his hand". As the C.O. knew, Sandys had "consistently encouraged" Dr Borg Olivier to make "as many international contacts as he can" in preparation for the day when Malta becomes independent and will need any kind of foreign aid that she can attract:

I hope that the British Embassy in Washington will extend to Dr Borg Olivier the courtesies appropriate to the Prime Minister of an almost-independent Commonwealth country and will give him all reasonable assistance for which he may ask.⁷

But then the British embassy in Washington complained that they had not known in advance of Borg Olivier's meeting with U Thant:

Dr Borg Olivier had very competently organised himself an interview with the Secretary General of the United Nations, although he had not told anyone about it, with the result that we only learned about it when a member of the British

⁷ Wakefield/Eastwood, 19 Aug. 1963, 926/1915/48583

Mission to the U.N. approached the Secretariat to suggest that one of the Secretary General's senior assistants should receive Dr Olivier in the course of his tour of the building. It made us look a little silly to be shown in this way not to know what one of our *protégés* was up to...⁸

Borg Olivier had asked Britain to hold his hand, not his foot. The message was that Malta was growing out of her weaning. But Malta still had no official representation in Washington. Moreover, as Borg Oliver must have surmised, British patronage would prove to be quite useful, possibly decisive, especially in helping the White House make up its mind whether the President should see him or not. To the Americans and generally around the world, Borg Oliver was an *inconnu*.

British diplomats in Washington had put out feelers to see if a meeting with Kennedy would be possible. The initial response was lukewarm and these vibes reached London. Was it true that Malta would be gaining her Independence in a few months' time? Was it likely that Borg Olivier would continue in office? What particular matters did he wish to bring up? Did he think that the U.S.A. would be giving Malta any financial aid? The State Department was a little perplexed by the outcome of the Malta Independence Conference, and did not know whether the decision that Malta should become independent by May 1964 was one that the British intended "to make stick"? Even so, would the Maltese cooperate with the British in the various operations that would have to be undertaken in the meantime? And if they did not, did Britain intend "to thrust independence upon them and walk out", as she laid down the mandate in Palestine? The State Department also enquired whether the UK would wish "to urge that Olivier be received by the President." They just did not know whether the President would wish to see Olivier or, if he did, whether he would be available to see him. Since Kennedy was a Catholic, they also wondered "whether

⁸ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 4 Oct. 1963, f. 5, 926/1915/488583.

Olivier's desire to be photographed with the President" indicated any intention on Borg Olivier's part "to use the President in any way in his argument with Mintoff over the Church issue." The British embassy wished to know what exactly was going on, so that these questions could be parried accordingly, particularly in view of some double dealing which may have been going on at the same time:

Is independence cut and dried, or is its attainment somewhat less straightforward than the Conference Report makes it appear? Naturally, if the guidance you can give us can also be passed to the Americans this would be all to the good, but in any event it would be useful to us to have some additional background upon which we can draw when we are asked for advice on what should be done with Olivier. Secondly, the State Department would, I feel sure, welcome a hint as to whether Wakefield's view that Olivier should be treated with courtesy but return empty-handed means also that he should return empty-handed so far as his aspirations to have a photograph of himself with Mr Kennedy are concerned...⁹

This last reference places Wakefield in a bad light, and contradicts his earlier entreaties in an opposite direction. Why would he have preferred Borg Olivier to return empty-handed? Would he hold hands no more? Would an American interest in Malta have weakened Britain's negotiating hand? Or an American presence upstaged the British one? In any case, the Americans told the British fairly and squarely that they had "no intention of offering economic aid to Malta". This meant "they do not relish talking to Olivier about this subject." Furthermore, they did not want "to take any soundings here with Olivier about the tropospheric scatter station."

This string of sceptical questions from Washington provoked in response a political appreciation of British intentions with regard to Malta's would-be independence that has rarely, if ever, been as

⁹ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 20 Aug. 1963, f. 2, para. 2, 196/1915/48583.

frankly stated on file. Explicitly, pointedly and indeed sincerely, the Head of the Mediterranean Department at the Colonial Office put the whole Malta question into a nutshell for the benefit of his American colleagues. In so doing, he must certainly have reassured his counter-parts across the Atlantic, who on their part went ahead and made the right noises, securing for Borg Olivier his sought-for *rendez-vous* - and photograph - with J. F. Kennedy.

Sandys was "very definitely intending to make Malta independent by 31st May next", Jack Kisch began in reply:

He reckons that Malta is going to become independent before long anyway and that the operation had better take place under Borg, who is pro-West and wishes to remain in the Commonwealth, than Mintoff, who, to say the least, is entirely unpredictable...

The thing is that Borg, with all his faults, is a moderate and therefore we are supporting him.

What they hoped to do therefore was "to negotiate a Defence Agreement with Borg" for signature immediately after independence. Also, within the next six months, there would have to be financial talks, which would no doubt be "very difficult":

The main trouble is the Church issue in Malta, which is reflected in the proposals which the two main parties have made for an independence constitution. Although the Maltese have been told to try to settle their differences, we do not expect them to be able to do so.

What he thought would happen was that

we will try to improve Borg's draft constitution, with his agreement we hope; thereafter there may well be a referendum, the Maltese being asked in effect whether they want Borg's constitution, i.e. a monarchy within the Commonwealth, or Mintoff's, a republican state.

Comparisons with Palestine and British Guiana were not well founded, Kisch held. The Maltese were all Catholics with the same racial, linguistic and historical backgrounds:

As long as the place remains a colony they will expect us to sort out their problems, but if they are on their own they will have to learn to look after themselves.

Admittedly they were economically in a sorry plight and "we will obviously have to go on helping them financially for a long time to come." In the U.S.A., Borg Olivier would be looking for aid, and of course so far as the U.K. was concerned, "we wish him luck, even though his chances do not appear to be very good." Pressing the point in relation to Borg Olivier's meeting with America's (first Roman Catholic) chief executive, Kisch did not think that Borg's wish to be photographed with the President had "any connection with the Church issue." Borg Olivier, he added reassuringly, would "behave in a dignified way" and would "not cause any public embarrassment". While noting politely that it was obviously "for the Americans to decide whether he (Borg Olivier) sees the President or not", he concluded by loading the dice:

I imagine that the State Department's interest in Malta is a political one, i.e. that one can imagine a situation where, particularly if the economic situations worsens, Mintoff will attempt to blackmail the Western Powers by threatening to sell out to the East.¹⁰

As the premier of a small British dependency Borg Olivier would not ordinarily qualify to be received at any level in protocol above that of Assistant Secretary of State, although as the chief minister of a territory which was going to receive its independence he could go higher. The Chief Minister of Mauritius, Ramgoolam, had just been

¹⁰ Kisch/Hennings, *conf.*, 28 Aug. 1963, Med/A.424, 926/1915/48583; Hennings/Kisch, *conf.*, 20 Aug. 1963, f. 1, para. 5, 926/1915/48583.

in Washington negotiating a loan with the IBRD: he got no higher than an Acting Assistant Secretary. Chief Ministers of British dependencies whom the President had seen, however, included Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana, Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika, and Michael Manley of Jamaica (all of them future leaders of their respective countries as independent states). The difference was that for such meetings the State Department had consulted with their own people on the spot, without soliciting the British embassy in Washington. Unlike Dr Borg Olivier, Dr Nyerere and Dr Manley had been formally invited to the U.S.A. by the American authorities themselves.¹¹

Accompanying Borg Olivier on his U.S. tour were the Financial Secretary, Alfred Salomone; the Deputy Attorney General, Dr Maurice Caruana Curran; and his Private Secretary, Chev. A. Gatt. Salomone and Caruana Curran had visited Washington in November 1962 to negotiate the loan with the World Bank.

During his stay in the U.S.A., the Maltese Prime Minister met with an impressive array of personalities, some of them big shots, like George Woods, President of the World Bank, who himself signed on behalf of the Bank and then hosted the Maltese delegation to a luncheon; and Laurence Rockefeller, whom Dean Rusk phoned up personally during his own meeting with Borg Olivier to suggest an appointment. Other meetings were with Willis C. Armstrong, Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs in the State Department; and with William R. Tyler, Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of European Affairs, who hosted the delegation to lunch at the State Department on Monday 9th September. In the afternoon of that day Borg Olivier had his meeting with Kennedy at the White House, at 5 p.m. The Maltese delegation also met, among other VIPs, L. W. Finlay, Head of Standard Oil's Government Relations Department and former Head of Esso Mediterranean, who hosted them to lunch. Another lunch was hosted by the senior vice-presidents of

¹¹ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 20 Aug. 1963, f. I, para. 5, 926/1915/48583

Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, while two more such occasions were hosted by Charles Cain Jr., Executive Vice-President of the Chase Manhattan Bank, and Edwin Thorne, Senior Vice-President of the First National City Bank. In the absence of the British ambassador to the U.S.A., Sir David Ormsby-Gore, the delegation were hosted to a dinner by the Chargé d'Affairs, Denis Greenhill. On Friday 13th September the Director of British Information Services gave a press lunch for the delegation. This was the third occasion on which Borg Olivier got a chance to meet with newspaper correspondents. His first, with press and television, was during his visit to Detroit on the 7th; and the second on the morning following his meeting with Kennedy, when his encounter had been limited to the Washington correspondents of the British press.

Before seeing U Thant at noon on the 13th, Borg Olivier called on the Permanent UK Representative to the UN, Sir Patrick Dean. On the *Otto Settembre*, so far the Maltese national day, Borg Olivier joined with the Maltese migrant community in Detroit, where he attended Mass and a wreath laying ceremony. On the 14th, a Saturday, he met and mixed with the Maltese community in New York during a reception they gave in his honour. He also met the Mayor of New York, Robert F. Wagner. His last official appointment before leaving for London was with the British Consul General in New York, who called on him on the 18th.¹² Borg Olivier's visit was a great occasion for meeting very important people, wining and dining, spreading Malta's name around, hopefully attracting some goodwill.

On transiting in London *en route* to New York, Borg Olivier had been met by Lord Lansdowne's private secretary, J. P. Mullarky, who had handed him a personal and most courteous letter from the Minister of State for the Colonies (Sandys was away). Wishing him a successful visit to the U.S.A., he was glad that the (British) embassy had been able to help in fixing up his programme "and that you are going to meet the President." Lansdowne added: "I hope your visit

¹² 'Visit of Malta Government Delegation - Programme', enc. 926/1915/48583.

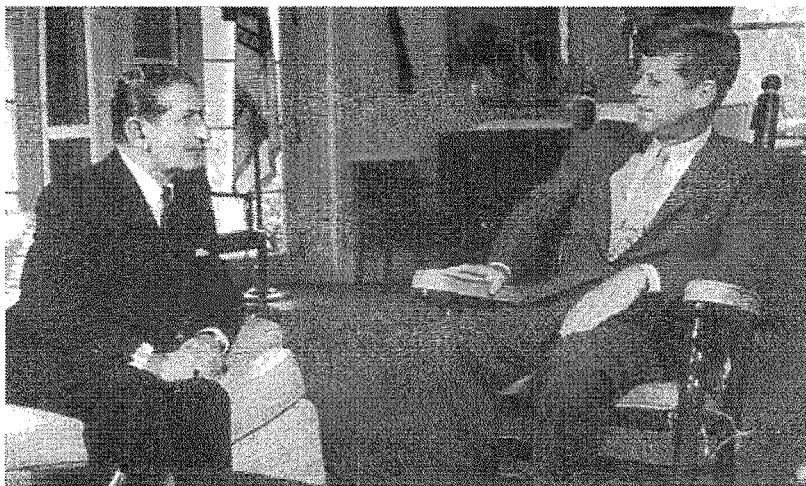
will be a real contribution to putting Malta 'on the map' in America. We look forward to seeing you again when you get back to London later in the month."¹³

Putting Malta on the map in America was one thing; getting something for Malta out of the Americans was quite another. What seemed to be on Borg Olivier's mind more than anything else in the meetings he had with American officials and politicians was the raising of the US immigration quota for Maltese. He brought this up in meetings at the State Department with Abba Schwarz and Bill Tyler, and again in his meetings with Dean Rusk and President Kennedy. According to one who was present for the discussions with Schwartz and Tyler, there were considerable pauses in the conversation at both meetings, and the initiative in keeping them going was assumed by the Americans. Rusk was apparently surprised that Borg Olivier had no requests to place before him and little to say, so much so that he asked the Prime Minister more than once if there really wasn't something he wanted to ask the United States to do. It was during a conversation about tourism that Rusk suggested that Borg Olivier might try to interest Laurence Rockefeller - who had done so much for the Virgin Islands - in the tourist possibilities of Malta. Rusk picked up the phone and called Rockefeller, telling him about Borg Olivier who would be paying him a visit, as he duly did two days later.

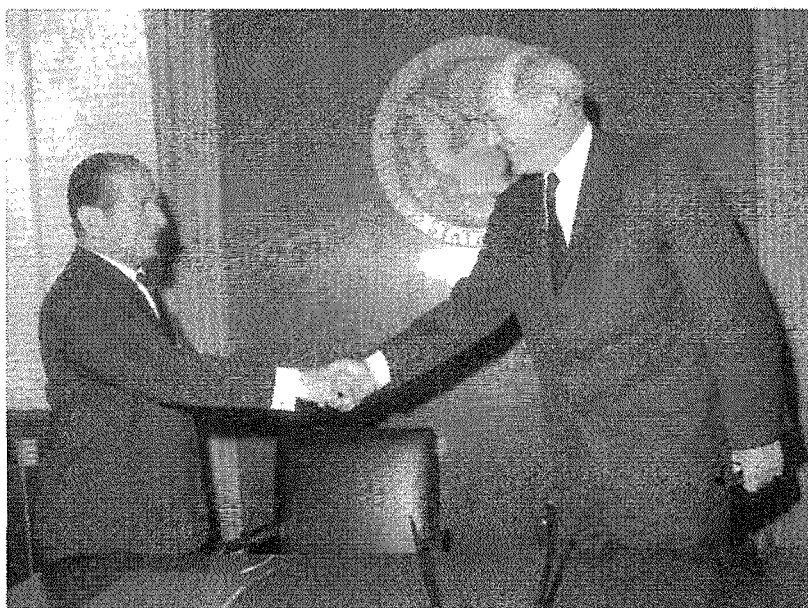
During his meeting with Kennedy, Borg Olivier was introduced to some of the Chiefs of Staff who had been attending a meeting at the White House. According to the British embassy in Washington, Borg Olivier was "somewhat discomfited to be engaged by the President in a conversation about the book 'The Great Siege' and had to confess that though the President may have read it, he hadn't!"¹⁴ The book in question was certainly Ernle Bradford's *The Great Siege: Malta 1565*, which was first published by Hodder and Stoughton in

¹³ Draft, 3 Sept. 1963, enc. Mullarky/Lansdowne, 5 Sept. 1963, 926/1915/48583.

¹⁴ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 4 Oct. 1963, f. 2, 926/1915/48583.



Dr Borg Olivier with President Kennedy at the White House and, below, with Mr Dean Rusk, the U.S. Secretary of State.



1961. The first Penguin paperback edition of it came out in 1964. *The Great Siege* may not have been Kennedy's bed-side reading, he could very well have been briefed about this book as a fill-in or warming up for this meeting, but Borg Olivier was not a Melitensia buff. If Kennedy had an historian on his consultative committee, the Maltese prime minister most definitely did not.

As a book about Malta's successful strategic and military role in holding the fort of Western European Christendom against the advancing Ottoman Muslims in the 16th century, written by a Royal Navy man who had first gone to Malta in 1942 navigating a destroyer, *The Great Siege* would have served - and indeed it may just have been intended to serve - as a preamble to highlighting Malta's continuing importance in Mediterranean security, where NATO after all still kept its Mediterranean Headquarters. From that could have flowed naturally some discussion of any American interests or intentions concerning Western defences in the Mediterranean. Borg Olivier was a proud man, not one to go around easily with a begging bowl in hand, and if he had a foreign language preference it would have been Italian rather than English - although he delivered himself well in English too (notwithstanding his 'r' impediment, more suitable to French). Not being well briefed however, his reflexes did not work; if here Borg Olivier had a golden opportunity to take a cue, he completely missed it. It would not be surprising if there were some hidden purpose in Kennedy's mind, or perhaps in the mind of his advisers, for specifically bringing up such a book in conversation. If it was just to make social conversation, somebody must have been at a loss for words. It seems that no specific American strategic or military interest in Malta was raised during the encounter. The British had said in advance that the Americans did not wish to discuss the 'scatter station', or financial aid. They may have briefed Borg Olivier accordingly, leaving him with nothing of any substance to talk about, other than the fixed American immigration quota.

On financial aid Borg Olivier in his encounters tried to bait the Americans by thanking the British for their assistance but noting, at the same time, that "as a country became independent it was not right for any one donor country to have to occupy a monopoly

position." He mentioned with satisfaction the attraction to Malta of a Hilton hotel and a German casino "as an augury for a hopeful economic future", and expressed confidence in the commercial judgment and shipping experience of Swan Hunter. He repeatedly stressed his affection for the monarchy, his desire to retain the Commonwealth connection, and "the identification of Malta with the West." In reply to an enquiry from Mr Rusk, he said that he foresaw that upon independence Malta would negotiate a defence agreement with the UK under which Maltese facilities would be available to Britain's NATO partners.

What was the tangible outcome of this visit? In strictly practical terms, Borg Oliver did leave empty-handed, as Wakefield had apparently anticipated with a smirk on his face. Apart from what was probably a useful and even fruitful familiarisation visit, with the publicity this afforded him and his country with what this could offer, he had landed no catch and had little substance to show for his efforts. Contacts had been made no doubt, for example Salomone met Thomas Street, the chief of planning and development in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But there was no breakthrough. In British if not in American eyes, "the upshot was that he created a pleasant impression of a nice but somewhat wistful little man who did not know quite what to do with the opportunities that had been placed in his way." Although he had quested after these interviews, he seemed "somewhat overwhelmed by the reality of them, and avidly sought advice on how to behave and what to say." Still worse, he apparently did not convince his listeners that he had the sense of purpose, resolution, public support, or command of the political situation "to justify them in concluding that Mr Mintoff would inevitably be the loser in any contest between them in the near future for the Premiership of Malta." Time would prove this impression wrong, because Borg Olivier's party was returned at the next elections in 1966, and only went down narrowly to Mintoff in 1971, yet impressions count too, even when they may be mistaken. The uncertain impression formed of Borg Olivier's political prospects had "undoubtedly encouraged the American government to seek more information" about British assessments of the future of Malta, including the question of whether Malta was in fact "likely

to be propelled into independence before the middle of next year." It led them to inform the British embassy in Washington that "they would now like to enter into the talks to which the Colonial Secretary invited Mr Rusk in a side conversation during the President's visit to Birch Grove in June."

Not even on the immigration quota had the Americans budged, unlike Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other places. This great land of immigrants in the New World only provided an annual quota of 100 for Maltese. Schwarz explained to Borg Olivier that when Malta became independent her present allocation, which was a sub-quota of the UK quota, would be replaced by a quota of her own, which would be calculated in accordance with the provisions of the law. That could offer Malta "a marginal improvement", but better hope lay in the enactment in the next session of Congress of the legislation proposed by the administration "which would raise the basic quota from 100 to 200, and provide that those parts of the quotas of some countries which were not filled should be reallocated among those other countries which were not heavily over-subscribed." He suggested that Malta would be "bound to benefit by this legislation" and expressed modest confidence that it would pass. Schwarz also explained that the American contribution of about \$28 per migrant for Maltese going to Australia had been given as an outright grant. This was "quite exceptional" and there was "no hope whatsoever" of Congress being ready to appropriate further monies for this (I.C.E.M.) scheme on that basis. Borg Olivier was appalled at the suggestion that henceforth assisted migrants should and might well be expected to repay such money as would have been advanced to them to emigrate, once these would have established themselves in the new country.¹⁵

Impressed and gratified though he was by the courtesy and attention with which he was received, by the consideration shown him by the President and the Secretary of State in finding time to

¹⁵ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 4 Oct. 1963, ff. 3-4, para. 3, and *passim*, 926/1915/48583. See below, II, 13.

meet him, Borg Olivier could hardly have known that such an apparently ephemeral outcome to his visit had been predicted. On arrival at Dulles International Airport (in the afternoon of 4th September) the Maltese delegation was greeted by the Deputy Chief of Protocol and by the Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, Willis Armstrong. They were fortified after their journey by complimentary Martinis in the Pan American V.I.P. Lounge - "measures of solicitude", observed John Hennings, "which I do not recall having been extended to any of the many other dignitaries from colonial territories who have visited Washington during my three years here..." Mr Armstrong, he added, probably explained the thought behind this careful courtesy in the comment: "Since we can't give this guy anything else we may as well give him the red carpet."¹⁶

The meeting with U Thant may have been more productive, given that the UN was already providing Malta with some assistance, and Malta was hoping to join the organisation soon as a full member. Borg Olivier told the correspondent of the London *Times* in New York that Malta was "looking forward to joining the United Nations when the island becomes independent early next year." He added that Malta was in fact "a United Nations in microcosm and by virtue of its geographic position and historical background hoped to contribute 'in a small way' to the working of the organization." The Prime Minister also discussed with U Thant the report of Dr Stolper, who had been surveying Malta's economic needs and whose team had drawn up a comprehensive and seminal report.¹⁷

Stolper, an American scholar from Harvard University, was in Malta engaged as a consultant to the UN. Borg Olivier would no doubt have expressed his gratitude for that and indicated that further

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ff.1-2, esp. para. 3, 926/1915/48583.

¹⁷ See the news item from the UN Correspondent datelined New York, Sept. 13, "Dr Borg Olivier sees U Thant", *The Times*, 14 Sept. 1963, enc. 926/1915/48583.

MEJ. 84/436/050.

British Embassy,
Washington, D.C.

CA3902/63

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4th October, 1963

My dear John,

The Prime Minister of Malta, Dr. the Honourable G. Borg Olivier, accompanied by the Financial Secretary, Mr. A. Salomone, the Deputy Attorney General, Dr. M. Carruana Curran, and his private secretary, Mr. A. Gatt, visited the United States of America from the 4th of September to the 19th of September, in the course of which they undertook various official engagements in Washington, New York and Detroit. I enclose a copy of their programme as it was in the event carried out.

The proximate reason given for this visitation was the formal execution upon behalf of the Government of Malta of the agreement for the loan which the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development is making Malta for an enlargement of the island's electrical generating capacity and the construction of a water distillation plant. However, since the signature of the loan agreement was no more than a formality and has upon every known occasion heretofore been undertaken by a member of this Embassy invested with the necessary powers by the beneficiary government, the decision of the Government of Malta to send its Prime Minister to perform this duty suggested that signature of the loan was no more than a convenient peg upon which to hang a visit to this country which might generate some useful publicity for Dr. Olivier and for Malta.

If this was the endeavour, it cannot be denied that the Prime Minister succeeded. The International Bank, who were at the outset impatient of the delay in signature which the Prime Minister's determination created, and unresponsive to the suggestion that it was in any way necessary that the Prime Minister should attend the ceremony, in the event played up manfully. Mr. George Woods, the successor to Mr. Eugene Black as President of the Bank, himself attended the ceremony and signed on behalf of the Bank (which Mr. D.A. Greenhill, R.M. Charge D'Affaires signed on behalf of the United Kingdom) and afterwards gave a luncheon to the Maltese delegation. The United States Government had seen no useful purpose for them in Dr. Olivier's visit, but, nonetheless, upon learning of his determination to come, bowed to the inevitable and accommodated him not only in his aspiration to be photographed with President Kennedy but also arranged for him to be received by the Secretary of State and to be the guest of honour at a luncheon given in the State Department by Mr. William Tyler, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Moreover, upon arriving at Dulles International Airport the Maltese delegation was greeted by the Deputy Chief of Protocol and the Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, Mr. Willis Armstrong, and fortified after their journey by complimentary Martinis in the Pan American V.I.P. Lounge; measures of solicitude which I do not recall having been extended to any of the many other dignitaries from colonial territories who have visited Washington during my three years here, even though many of them, like Mr. Julius Nyerere and Mr. Norman Manley, came at the direct invitation of the U.S. authorities and did not impose themselves upon the U.S.A. at their own initiative! Mr. Armstrong probably explained the thought behind this careful courtesy in the comment "Since we can't give this guy anything else we may as well give him the red carpet". This indeed may well have been a well-judged assessment. There is no doubt whatever that Dr. Olivier was impressed and gratified by the courtesy and attention with which we were received and by the consideration shown him by the President and the Secretary of State in finding time to meet him. It is somewhat unfortunate that, although he had queried after these interviews, he seemed somewhat overwhelmed by the reality of them, and avidly sought advice on how to behave and what to say. The upshot was that he

J.M. Kishd, Esq.

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The first folio of a confidential report on Borg Olivier's USA visit by John Hennings from the British embassy in Washington.

studies of this kind in other areas would be most helpful. In fact various other U.N. experts later came to Malta on different projects. As for Malta's future contribution to the U.N. 'in a small way', her first permanent representative after 1964, Dr Arvid Pardo, would not let Malta down and took Borg Olivier for his word, especially through the initiatives he would initiate and sponsor on Malta's behalf relating to the peaceful uses of the sea-bed and ocean-floor as the common heritage of mankind.

A noteworthy fall-out from Borg Olivier's visit to the U.S.A. concerned the rumoured American intention or interest in possibly using Malta as a Mediterranean base for Polaris submarines, which Mintoff had inveighed against during his meeting with Sandys in Valletta three months earlier. Mintoff later brought up the matter in Parliament as well,¹⁸ while the MLP press made quite a song and dance of the fact that in Washington Borg Olivier had been prepared to consider such a prospect.¹⁹ Polaris was a solid-propellant two-stage missile developed by Lockheed for the US Navy and first fired in 1958. It had a nuclear warhead and was designed to be launched from a submerged submarine.

When quizzed by journalists about the prospect of a Polaris base during his visit to the U.S.A., Borg Olivier did not discourage it. On the contrary, he said that he would be prepared to consider it and may even have given the impression that he would actually welcome it. He was reported to have told President Kennedy that "an independent Malta would support NATO and, if called upon, would be ready to consider providing base facilities." If so, Kennedy had not taken him up on that, as one might have expected he would have

¹⁸ See the report of his speech at the sitting of 31st Oct. 1963, *Il-Helsien*, 1 Nov. 1963, p.2.

¹⁹ See the front-page banner headline "Borg Olivier joffri Malta bhala Bazi tal-Polaris", *ibid.*, 11 Sept. 1963; but see also the report in *L-Orizzont*, 'Il-Prim Ministru fuq il-Bazi tal-Polaris: "L-ewwel Nikkonsiderawha mbghad niddeciedu"', 12 Sept. 1963, p.3.

done if the Americans were really interested in some new exploit. With regard to a Polaris submarine base, Borg Olivier said: "We are so exposed anyway, it would make no difference. We are going to welcome the U.S. 6th Fleet whenever it wishes to use Malta dockyards and harbours."²⁰ In fact, the U.S Sixth Fleet would call and make more use of the Malta dockyards and harbours in the Sixties. Sandys too had told Mintoff that Malta would not be spared in the event of a nuclear war.

But the key point to be noted in all the churned-up agitation concerning the use of Malta as a base for American Polaris submarines is that there never was any elaborate project for it. The possibility had been examined early in 1963 and ruled out on technical grounds by mid-May. It was a red herring. In reply to questions on this, Borg Olivier explicitly stated that the question of providing a base for Polaris submarines "was not discussed." Had the Americans been really serious about the matter they would hardly have lost the opportunity offered by a face-to-face encounter between the Maltese prime minister and the American president to at least mention it. While some such possibility was indeed considered at one point, it had been dropped on technical grounds if not for any other reasons. The idea of using Malta for this purpose never got very far at all. It was just another specimen of Maltese wishful thinking for one side, and an Aunt Sally for the other.

The one who started the story going was Bruce Rothwell, the *Daily Mail's* Washington correspondent. As soon as it was known that Dr Borg Olivier was visiting the U.S.A. he had sought "to link it to the possibility of Malta becoming a base for Polaris submarines." In connection with Borg Olivier's description of the reorganisation of the dockyard to a civilian ship repair yard, Rothwell enquired whether the yard had done "any work for the U.S. Sixth Fleet." In what an eye-witness at this press encounter described as "an

²⁰ See 'Malta drops Polaris hint', by the *Daily Mail's* reporter in Washington, *Daily Mail*, 11 Sept. 1963, enc. 926/1915/48583.

unguarded moment", Borg Olivier had extended "all the proper sentiments about the defence of the free world and support for the United States...to a readiness to accept U.S. Polaris submarines in Malta." Borg Olivier was "led to this unguarded remark" by Rothwell, in reply to whom Borg Olivier said that Malta would always be ready to do anything for the United States:

Did this mean that they would accept U.S. Polaris submarines then? Dr Olivier replied that it did, if the Americans would like to send them, but he added the matter had not been raised with him at any time. Rothwell then suggested that Dr Olivier's willingness to have Malta become a Polaris base might create unfortunate political difficulties for him in Malta, to which he replied quite tellingly that in any nuclear war Malta could not escape involvement in a nuclear barrage whether she was a Polaris base or not.²¹

Before leaving New York for London, Borg Olivier sent a 'thank you' letter from the Waldorf-Towers Hotel in New York, where he was staying, to Sir Edward Wakefield in Malta "for your wonderful help and co-operation in the planning of my visit." He hoped that he was not being "unduly optimistic" in saying that the visit had been a success. "I am particularly gratified by the knowledge", Borg Olivier told Wakefield, "that your efforts on my behalf were not just an act in the course of duty but also based on considerations of personal friendship which I heartily reciprocate and on your love of Malta." In informing him that he hoped to be back during the last week of the month after the conference in London (and with characteristic courtesy extending his personal regards also to Lady Wakefield) Dr Borg Olivier registered his own impressions of what this trip had meant:

We have learnt much on this visit but mostly the need of making Malta better known and its needs in the difficult

²¹ Hennings/Kisch, Conf., 4 Oct. 1963, f. 2, para. 2, f. 4, para. 2, 926/1915/48583.

days ahead better appreciated in this country. Malta could certainly do with an injection of American private enterprise.²²

The Americans had been at odds and ends with the British about Polaris for some time, until an agreement in Nassau in 1962 whereby the former agreed to supply the latter with some such missiles. The British had been interested in the American Skybolt missile, a project which the Americans later scrapped. The problem for Britain was whether or not it could afford to have an independent nuclear deterrent in the vain hope that it retained a world power status independently of the U.S.A. and was in no way inferior to France. The British Defence White Paper of 1957 frankly declared that Britain was not in a position to defend herself against a nuclear attack: "the only existing safeguard against major aggression is the power to threaten retaliation with nuclear weapons." Britain experimented solely or jointly with various missiles during the Sixties - Blue Streak, Black Knight, Blue Steel, Skybolt, Black Arrow - but these ambitious stratagems all more or less came to grief. Britain was forced to drop out of the nuclear club except for Polaris submarines, each of which possessed the capability of firing from under the sea 16 missiles with nuclear warheads at enemy targets. But Polaris was a prized American weapon, and it was only at Nassau that the Americans agreed to make it available to the British - thus Britain got four Polaris submarines. As Russia had ground superiority over NATO forces, the nuclear deterrent became of utmost importance to the West. Britain was still hoping to produce its own TSR2 weapon system but this too was eventually cancelled due to high costs.²³ Anglo-American relations were strained in the early 1960s because of the nuclear issue and access to nuclear power. In December 1962 Macmillan told Kennedy that if Britain were to

²² Borg Olivier/Wakefield, 18 Sept. 1963, 926/1915/48583.

²³ See Paul Kenendy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Fontana, 3rd ed., 1991), pp. 391-395, 405-407.

be left without effective nuclear weapons as a result of the American decision to scrap Skybolt, the Conservative Party would probably decide that the alliance with the U.S.A. has been a mistake, it would sweep him (Macmillan) away and replace him with an anti-American government. It was in this way that Britain acquired American polaris submarines which could be used without any consultation with other countries in the event of "a supreme national emergency".²⁴ The R.A.F. still continued to push for an independent nuclear deterrent. One of those against it was in fact Mountbatten who believed that an independent British force would be "neither credible as a deterrent, nor necessary as part of the Western deterrent."²⁵

Malta was stepping into more than one breach without realising it. The U.S.A. planned to put polaris submarines on patrol in the Mediterranean by April 1963. These were expected to be "placed in some way under NATO command", because Kennedy had offered that much in May, 1960. The U.S. had some difficulty identifying a good Polaris base in the Mediterranean, however. They were seeking a Mediterranean base for the three Polaris submarines despatched to the area earlier in 1963 to take over the strategic assignments of Jupiter missile bases dismantled in Turkey and Northern Italy. These Polaris submarines were then operating out of the U.S.A. and Holy Loch in Scotland.²⁶ The Americans would have liked to use the naval base at Rota, Spain, but this raised insuperable obstacles (partly because it rested on a "mutual decision" agreement). For political reasons, Fanfani's government was not readily offering the U.S.A. facilities in Italy. The possibility could not be excluded, therefore, cabled the Washington correspondent of *The Times* on 12th February 1963, that

²⁴ T.O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State*, *op.cit.*, p. 382.

²⁵ Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten* (Fontana, 1986), p. 561.

²⁶ "Malta and Polaris Base", *Times of Malta*, 11 Sept. 1963, p.1.



Mr Harrison Lewis, the American consul general in Malta in 1963/64, who later acted as ambassador.

Britain might be asked to provide a base in Malta or Gibraltar. Apparently no formal proposals have yet been made but the idea would seem to conform with the spirit of the Nassau agreement.²⁷

On the following day, however, the BBC and other sections of the press suggested that the US had run into difficulties over providing facilities for Polaris submarines in the Mediterranean and would have to depend on Holy Loch. It was also suggested, the Foreign Office briefed the British embassy in Washington, "that they (the Americans) are considering Malta as a possible site for facilities." The British were ready to oblige. The cyphered and secret F.O. telegram to Washington continued thus:

Please speak to the State Department as a matter of urgency and tell them that we believe that, given a suitable safe location and satisfactory arrangements on the lines of those for the Holy Loch Memorandum of Understanding, it should be possible to arrange for them to operate from

²⁷ "Possible Use of Malta", *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1963.

Malta. Although, under the Constitution, Her Majesty's Government retains ultimate responsibility for defence and foreign affairs, we should obviously have to consult the Malta Government at an early stage.

The F.O. added that if the Americans showed interest, they would be willing to examine the matter further in consultation with them, "bringing the present Maltese Government in as soon as appropriate."²⁸

The UK Commissioner in Malta had been informed about this prospect a fortnight earlier and kept *au courant*. The best approach was, he advised, "to mention (this) fairly casually" to the Prime Minister and "get approval in principle and permission to negotiate on safety arrangements" on a much lower level. Having recourse to the Consultative Council (a joint Anglo-Maltese committee which Dorman chaired) was not considered appropriate. As the subject of American polaris submarines in the Mediterranean possibly based in Malta was "hot news here at the moment", and it was vehemently opposed by the MLP and the GWU press, Wakefield considered this "the worst possible moment" in which to approach the Prime Minister. He would prefer to wait two or three weeks before doing so. He asked however for a safety officer on nuclear propulsion to visit Malta in mid-March. If he would not be available then, he would like to have the safety officer immediately rather than not at all.²⁹

In Malta, the Italians were very interested in what the Americans were up to in conjunction with the British. Dr Messina, the Italian Consul, saw the U.S. Consul General, Mr Ruffner, about the suggested Polaris scheme. According to Wakefield, Ruffner told Messina that "the United States Government had no plans

²⁸ Tel., F.O./Washington, 13 Feb. 1963, sec., 8.10 p.m., 926/2078.

²⁹ F.O. Malta/Admiralty, 16 Feb. 1963, conf., 926/2078. "Warning - No unclassified reply or reference".

whatsoever for using Malta as a base for Polaris submarines.” However, Ruffner also told Wakefield that he had received “a secret message from the State Department” which he could not communicate to him. Ruffner had “no doubt”, Wakefield wrote to the C.O., that he (Wakefield) would be getting similar information on his own “channel”.

The next paragraph in Wakefield’s letter is also revealing. It suggests that the Maltese government had been annoyed at British involvement with regard to the possibility of basing in Malta a tropospheric scatter station for the US Air Force. This so-called “scatter station” was mentioned in secret despatches, briefs and other correspondence a number of times, but nothing much was ever specified about how likely the prospect of setting it up was or what it would do exactly. Given the Mediterranean security context and East-West relations, it was almost certainly intended as a listening post which could intercept, code and decode messages from air to ground or vice-versa. In those pre-satellite days, when so much naval and military traffic was using the Mediterranean - over the air space of which Malta had extensive control - the Americans were interested in some such facility. The British must already have had it, through Sigint (Signals Intelligence) at Luqa, and the classified messages of its DF Facility; but the Americans seem to have wanted one of their own, or a supplementary one, which could link up with the Sixth Fleet, among other things.

“If the United States want to obtain operational facilities in Malta for their Polaris submarines”, the UK Commissioner advised London,

the sensible thing would be for them to secure Admiralty approval to the facilities they require and then enter into direct negotiations with the Malta Government for the grant to them of these facilities. After our experience with the Malta Government over the proposed U.S.A.F. Scatter Station I am sure that no other procedure is feasible.³⁰

³⁰ Wakefield/Eastwood, 25 Feb. 1963, sec., 926/2078.

2. I am pleased to inform you that your request has been accepted and that the delegation of executive authority in the field of external affairs by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the Government of the State of Malta, as defined in the despatches of the 13th July and 19th November, 1962, is hereby extended as defined in the following paragraph.

3. The executive authority of the Government of the State of Malta with respect to its external affairs with other countries shall, under section 83 of the State of Malta Constitution, 1961, be extended to include powers to receive a request from the Government of the United States of America to establish an American Radio Relay Station in Malta and to negotiate the conditions under which such Radio Relay Station may be established in Malta, such negotiations also to include the status arrangements for the United States personnel who would be manning the Radio Relay Station.

4. The U.S. Government is being informed that powers to negotiate direct with its representatives have been delegated by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the Government of the State of Malta.

5. I shall be grateful if you will acknowledge the receipt of this despatch.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,

(SGD.) DUNCAN SANDYS

On 24th May 1963 permission was granted by Sandys to Borg Olivier for direct Maltese-American negotiations on a U.S.A.F. "Radio Relay Station", provided that Britain concurred with the terms of any agreement reached.

The implication is clear. The Borg Olivier administration had told off Wakefield when they found out that the British were discussing with the Americans on their behalf, without their knowing, the possibility of basing such a station in Malta.

Repeated references to this "tropospheric scatter station" for the U.S.A.F. in Malta remained somewhat nebulous. Was it just a "radio relay station"? The key operational area for a scatter station would be the troposphere, the lowest layer of the atmosphere in which temperature falls as height increases, which was meant to have special operational qualities for certain purposes. To overhear, without permission, communications between hostile or potentially hostile electronic stations, was a vital precautionary facility. Interception could interfere with, and possibly prevent, the arrival of a hostile military force at its destination. Contact could also be made, visually

or by radar, of a friendly aircraft with an unidentified one. By close controlled interception, the interceptor was continuously controlled by a surface or air station. Through broadcast controlled interception, the interceptor was given the area of interception by a surface or air station but effected interception without further control.

What was involved apparently was Malta's direct insertion into a NATO communications chain which ran from Norway to Libya, and which could relay and receive messages through high frequency beams. Mr G. H. Ferro, a senior civil servant who served as clerk to the Executive Council from 1960 to 1962 before becoming Director of Civil Aviation, referred to it as a "Forward Scatter Station", adding that this was a code name. Ferro was *au courant* with the project; in 1963 he started attending the Regional Air Navigation meetings of the European Mediterranean and Africa regions of the International Civil Aviation Organization. The Americans eventually obtained some such facility as was being mooted in 1962-63 at Marfa Ridge, in the relatively remote extreme north of the archipelago's main island. After independence, an official in the Office of the Prime Minister had suggested the Qrendi strip as a location for it, but as this station required a huge dish set-up and Qrendi was much too close to Luqa airfield itself, Marfa was selected instead. Ferro had seen the American ambassador about this recommendable alternative site. One side of the station looked towards Italy while the other looked towards Libya. The Qrendi strip, now built over, was used for aircraft dispersals during the Second World War.³¹

There are no indications that the intended Scatter Station actually materialised before independence; indeed Borg Olivier had probably been warned in advance of his meeting with Kennedy, by the British, that the Americans did not want to discuss it.³² Compared to the Polaris base, the U.S.A.F. Scatter Station project attracted hardly any public attention.

³¹ Sandys/Borg Olivier, 24 May 1963, conf., enc. Wakefield/Borg Olivier, 10 June 1963; Wakefield/Borg Olivier, 10 June 1963; Amato-Gauci/Wakefield, 14 June 1963, encs. in 'U.S.A. Radio Relay Station in Malta - delegation of powers i.c.w.', NAM 'G' Files, ser. 47/63, sec.; Ferro/Frendo interview, 23 July 1999.

One article in a Maltese newspaper noted that "if the United States wants us to base her Polaris Submarines in our midst we must ask her to shoulder our adverse economic situation. The United States has poured millions of dollars in Western Europe... We are absolutely sure... that in considering the question of Malta-based Polaris submarines, the Nationalist Government of Malta will decide what is best for Malta..." The article was a critique of neutralism, mentioning Ghana and India (then in trouble with Communist China) as failed examples of it, and quoted from an address just made by the U.S. Defence Secretary Robert McNamara to the U.S. Armed Services Committee:

The whole world is heading towards an era when it will become increasingly improbable that either side could destroy a sufficiently large portion of the other's strategic nuclear force, either by surprise or otherwise, to preclude a devastating retaliatory blow. This may result in mutual deterrence, but it is still a grim prospect. As the arms race continues, the possibility of a global catastrophe, either by miscalculation or design, becomes more real. But until we can find a safe and sure sign to disarmament, we must continue to build up our defences.³²

In May 1963 the U.S. Department of Defence informed the Department of State that a Polaris submarine base in Malta was not technically feasible. Valletta harbour, the Defence Department said, did not meet the U.S. safety requirements for Polaris tender

³² Apart from the American operation at Marfa Ridge, which was stopped after Minto came to power in 1971, similar surveillance activities also took place from Hal Far and one or two other sites. Such monitoring and communications strategy fell under external affairs and so it would have normally been under direct British control. The Americans might have shared intelligence with the British and vice-versa if and as appropriate, although clearly both powers preferred to be as self-reliant as possible; both of course had their own navies with aircraft in the region. Malta controlled a very large range of air space from Luqa.

³³ "Malta as a Polaris Base", by 'Praetor', *The Bulletin*, 4 Mar. 1963, enc. 926/2078.

operations. They thought Valletta harbour to be excellent in many respects, including routine visits of nuclear-powered submarines, but the Harbour did not have the standard conventional explosive safety distances for the handling of operations which a tender basing scheme would involve, nor did it meet the tidal flushing requirements for reactor safeguards. Two other harbours in Malta had been examined but they both fell short of the requirements for protection from sea and wind. The Americans therefore decided that upon technical grounds Malta would be unsuitable as a base for American Polaris Submarines.³⁴

While it is certain that American inspections were carried out in Maltese harbours to check if any of these would be suitable for what they had in mind, at no point was there a decision that Malta could or would be requested as a Polaris base. The negotiation of such a venture with the Americans would have given the British a brokerage role which, had the Americans been interested, might have found the ready consent of the Maltese administration, subject to certain conditions. But to speculate about money-in-return-for-base with the Americans - as if it was they not the British who had possessed Malta for 164 years - was to put the cart before the horse. There was no horse. In objecting to a Polaris base with Sandys in June 1963, Mintoff was already fighting a windmill. The Americans had already technically knocked out any such possibility, and informed the British accordingly. As this information was relayed by Washington to London while Sandys was in Malta, he may not yet have known about it.

The Foreign Office duly informed the Colonial Office of the situation. They also asked for their assessment of "the technical grounds" given by the Americans. As the British had felt rather left out of the nuclear programme, they were keen to keep a finger in

³⁴ Wilkinson/Rose, 13 May 1963, sec., 926/2078. The U.S. Defence Department's decision was conveyed by Washington tel. no. 1424, 10 May 1963, but a letter of explanation sent from them to the U.S. Department of State was shown to Mr P. Wilkinson of the British embassy in Washington on 13 May, who promptly communicated the news to the Foreign Office in London.

the pie through Malta. They were also keen to have as much NATO-linked back-up in Malta as possible, in this case through the U.S.A., since they were planning to depart as a colonial power. That Malta had been dismissed on technical grounds came as something of a disappointment, at least to the F.O. Therefore, they tried again by re-defining the terms.

"When we made the offer to the Americans in February to consider the possibility of Malta as a base we had in mind that it might be used by the United States submarines which were to replace the Jupiter missiles", they told the C.O. "We were not thinking at that time in terms of a base for the mixed-manned force", they held, adding:

Now that we are discussing facilities which we might offer as part of our contribution to a mixed-manned force, we should like to examine whether Malta would be suitable for this purpose. The point to establish is to what extent the technical objections given... would apply to the use of Malta for a Polaris surface ship force.

This was primarily a matter for the Admiralty. Assuming that Malta was not ruled out on technical grounds, they would have to consider "the political and practical implications".³⁵ The F.O. copied their presumed option to Mr Stephens from the Defence Ministry, who was monitoring Malta, for his comments as well.

The F.O. official dealing with this matter, Mr C. M. Rose, stayed in contact with the Washington embassy about it until September 1963. He inquired about what exactly had been said on such matters during the meeting Borg Olivier had with Kennedy earlier that month. Mr J. K. E. Broadley from the embassy again saw his counter-part in the State Department and again reported back to London the Defence Department's opinion "on the unsuitability of Valletta harbour". It was in view of that, Broadly wrote, that "the question of Polaris submarines had not been raised at all, nor indeed had the possible provision of

³⁵ Rose/Crawley, 6 June 1963, sec., 926/2078.

any other sort of defence facilities at Malta.” The last part of this sentence may be presumed to refer to the suggested U.S.A.F. Scatter Station, which in this light could be seen to have been envisaged hypothetically as a possible corollary to the would-be Polaris base.

Delving further into what views had been exchanged exactly during Borg Olivier’s U.S.A. visit, it transpired that Dean Rusk had asked Borg Olivier what future connection he saw between Malta and NATO. The latter replied that in due course there would be a defence agreement with the UK and that under this agreement facilities would be available at Malta to the UK “and its allies”. Borg Olivier’s remarks upon which *The Daily Mail*’s report was based had been made “at an informal meeting here” with representatives of the British press. As soon as it was known that Borg Olivier was coming, Bruce Rothwell of *The Daily Mail* started enquiring as to whether any defence matters, particularly those concerning the Polaris submarines, were to be discussed. He probed Borg Olivier on this at the press briefing. He first asked, in connection with the Prime Minister’s remarks about attracting ship-repairing work to the dockyard, “whether they would be ready to work for the American Sixth Fleet”. Dr Borg Olivier seemed taken aback by this twist to the discussion - reported Broadley, who was obviously present - and said that the Maltese would always be ready to help the American forces:

Rothwell then asked if he had any comment on the possibility of using Malta as a Polaris submarine base, and Olivier replied that it was worth considering. Rothwell asked if there might not be political argument in Malta over a policy which, if adopted, might expose the island to nuclear obliteration. Dr Olivier replied, rather tellingly, that in the event of nuclear war, Malta would be in equal danger of nuclear obliteration whether or not she now offered facilities to the United States Navy.³⁶

³⁶ Broadley/Rose, 19 Sept. 1963, sec., 926/2078.

Oltre Mare

THE ITALIAN OPTION

If there were two 'new' beacons which the Maltese government looked up to for understanding and support, these were the U.S.A. and Italy. The former, an ex-British territory taken in rein by European pioneers and migrant settlers, was the most powerful, prosperous and advanced, leader of the Western bloc, 'comrade-in-arms' during two world wars. The latter, a onetime titular holder of the Maltese Islands through the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, was the closest neighbour and the first *terra ferma*, the land of Dante and seat of Christendom, a reborn democracy and Western ally whose spirits and fortunes had animated or affected Maltese anti-colonial nationalism ever since the *Risorgimento*.

When Borg Olivier went to the U.S.A., Felice was in Rome. Borg Olivier too visited Rome more than once between 1962 and 1964, on one occasion meeting the Italian Prime Minister, Amintore Fanfani. These simultaneous visits to Washington and to Rome were not a simple coincidence: they were a paradigm, especially in the case of the latter. Before asking for the British to intervene on their side in 1798 against the French revolutionary regime, the Maltese leaders had first implored the Sicilian king's permission. When, four years later, it seemed that Malta would be given back to the Knights

under article 10 of the Treaty of Amiens of 1802, the Maltese leaders had protested, saying that if the British wanted to leave, Malta would revert to the Maltese for them to decide about their future: the British had no right to dispose of Malta by handing her to another power without their permission.¹

Much water had passed under the bridge since then but, as Nerik Mizzi used to say, the geography does not change. In other words, from a Gozo roof-top on a clear day you could still see the Etna. Historically, in the twentieth century, the integration or federation arrangement (*'pactum foederis'*) of Malta with Italy, granting Malta an autonomy without isolation, a special status, was a Mizzian idea, dating back to his return from Italy, where he made such 'irredentist' proposals in Italian reviews before the First World War and his entry into Maltese politics.²

For daring to express such views, Mizzi was hounded on suspicion of disloyalty to the British Crown practically for the rest of his life. Court-martialled on trumped-up charges in 1917, he was interned without charge in 1940, and deported without charge to Uganda in 1942. By the time he became Prime Minister in 1950 his earlier 'anti-Britishness' had thawed and was replaced by a new-found mantle of moderation, which Borg Olivier then took up and carried forward pragmatically.

In the meantime, under De Gasperi's Christian Democrats, post-war Italy had risen like a Phoenix from the ashes. By the 1950s she also had, in opposition, the largest Communist Party in Western Europe. An outstanding figure of the Italian left, who broke off with the Communists in the late 1950s, was Pietro Nenni. In 1963, this Socialist leader became deputy to Aldo Moro, Italy's Christian Democratic premier, in a new centre-left four-party coalition

¹ See H. Frendo, *Maltese Political Development 1798-1964*, *op.cit.*, pp. 29-30, 55-56.

² See H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31, 151-161, 177-179.

government, which included social democrats and socialists. In the run-up to Malta's independence, Nenni was one of the maverick socialist leaders on Mintoff's lobby list of fellow travellers.

In the light of Mintoff's earlier attempt to integrate Malta with Great Britain, for which over 67,000 Maltese electors had voted in a referendum in 1956, it is surprising but not astounding to discover that the stratagem of Malta's integration with a larger power could have lingered on in his psyche.³ Faced by an Independence which he would not have himself obtained, and by a constitution that was too conservative for his liking, Mintoff fished around for a republican alternative. And it seems that his gaze went further than that of Borg Olivier, who was intent on striking a deal with Britain and retaining the Commonwealth connection. Had these politicians changed sides and sympathies, or was this simply a cat-and-mouse game, with the good cat being the one which caught the fish?

There were nonetheless many ironies in an MLP opening up to Italy, which is why the Italo-Maltese plan, such as it was, remained a top secret. To date, an MLP-conceived Italian constitutional option for Malta after independence, or indeed instead of it, has never been denied or confirmed by the party. At the same time that Mintoff was committing his party to neutrality, approaching the likes of Ben Bella, Nasser and Khrushchev, he was also putting out feelers to Italy and apparently devising a special status for Malta under her aegis. Italy was a member of NATO, of the European Economic Community, and she had been, ever since the end of the War, governed by Christian Democrats, as she was still. At home, Mintoff had for decades teased and tormented the Nationalists on their Italian sympathies from the pre-war years, often throwing in Fascism with the Mafia for good measure. If politics be the art of the possible, however, no experiment was likely to deter a Mintoff, however unconventional; and even less so if he assumed that the power

³ See Denis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Cass, London, 1971), and also his introduction to the first edition of H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, ix-xii.

equation of Italian politics would soon be changing. Nenni, after all, had served under De Gasperi, even as foreign minister in the late 1940s; in 1963 he again became a senior member of the Italian government.

Stray pieces of information concerning this 'Italian option' for Malta have come to light in recent years, whetting the appetite for more.⁴ With the help of the additional archival material now available, it becomes possible to add some brush strokes to the unfinished picture of this intriguing episode, as well as to set it in the broader context of unfolding Italo-Maltese relations just before Independence.

Although in the newly-released archival material no textual evidence on file has come to light of the secret MLP memorandum despatched or conveyed to Rome in April 1963, there is mention and assessment of what was probably its most salient feature. That was the prospect of some arrangement for Malta with Italy on the lines existing in the case of the Republic of San Marino. In this connection, in fact, a brief was drawn up in London explaining in some detail what the exact status of San Marino was, and what was San Marino's relationship at law to the Republic of Italy.

What is no less interesting is the fact that the Foreign Office got wind of this San Marino initiative months before the MLP's lengthy and elaborately formulated memorandum was sent to Italy in April 1963, and also before a full-scale visit which Mintoff paid to Italy in February 1963. This clearly suggests that the MLP plan was not a fall-out from meetings Mintoff happened to have had while in Italy in February. On the contrary, he went to Italy to hold further discussions about it there, very probably at a higher level than he had so far done. The memorandum was thus finalised *after* these further consultations had taken place in Italy.

⁴ See H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of Maltese History* (Valletta, 1989), pp. 248-252.

In a hand-written exchange of minutes and margin comments in January 1963, with reference to "a further letter and enclosures from the F.O.", a reference to San Marino was pencilled out "which we might include if it is likely that we might have to seek further info. from the F.O. on the relationship between S.M. and Italy." The words "a refce. to San Marino which we might include" were underlined in the same ink.⁵ This tentative suggestion was approved by a more senior C.O. official through an initialled and dated instruction in the margin: "Yes." The draft C.O. letter to the Foreign Office was thus amended to take account of the San Marino factor, as approved.⁶ Meaningful too is an earlier comment about "the powers Malta already enjoys for seeking financial and economic aid from Foreign countries".⁷ The follow-up action undertaken evidently presumed that there was more to it than this.

A brief was drawn up about San Marino. This was divided into two parts. The first was entitled 'General' and the second 'Relations with Italy'. Under the first section, San Marino was described as a tiny republic in Northern Italy in the hills overlooking Rimini. Founded in the fourth century, San Marino had an area of 38 square miles and a population of about 13,000. San Marino's legislative power was vested in the Grand Council of 60 members who were elected every five years by popular vote. The councillors were elected every six months to act as Regents. These exercised executive power together with the Council of State which comprised ten Departments. The republic had its own juridical authority. It also had its own militia in which all able bodied men between the age of 16 and 60 were liable to serve. Income tax had been introduced in 1922 and a fruitful source of revenue derived from frequent changes of postage stamps.

⁵ Crawley/Fairclough, 23 Jan. 1963, 926/1876/48489.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Fairclough/Kisch, 23 an. 1963.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Crawley/Fairclough, 23 Jan. 1963.

As to San Marino's relations with Italy, it was noted that the Republic entered into a treaty of relations, including a customs union, with Italy in 1862. A considerable part of its revenue was drawn from the Italian Government "in exchange for an acknowledgement of the Italian state monopolies in tobacco, playing cards, etc." A treaty of friendship with Italy was concluded in 1897 and renewed in 1953, with amendments in 1961. In addition to the local currency of San Marino, Italian and Vatican currency were also in general use there. Diplomas from the Republic's high school were recognized by Italian universities.⁸

The MLP's April memorandum referred specifically to San Marino in its twenty-fifth paragraph, but subsequent paragraphs also bear on it. The text of these reads thus:

25. The exact form of these much desired closer relations between Malta and Italy will be established after an exhaustive study of the matter, and in such a way that it will turn out to be the best and the most useful in the common interest of Italy and Malta. One could consider a relationship similar to that with San Marino, or to a regional autonomy similar to that of Sicily.
26. An exhaustive study could ascertain moreover whether it would be desirable in the common interest that Malta should remain a neutral territory like Singapore (a similar proposal was made in the treaty of Amiens) and would thereby be useful to Italy and the Common Market.
27. It is here to be recorded that Maltese politicians have recently approached Italian statesmen to discuss the solution of Malta's political problems on the lines referred to above.

⁸ 'San Marino', enc. 926/1822/48655.

28. We expect now that the representatives of the Government and of the Italian political parties express their position in this regard. In particular, the Malta Labour Party requests this to be able to go ahead with this plan of theirs; and this was the purpose of its Leader Dom Mintoff's visit to Italy in February 1963...⁹

The April memorandum twice invoked article 51 of the Italian Constitution which gave to "Italians not appertaining to the Republic" the rights of Italian citizens.¹⁰ The Italian Constitution provided for autonomous regions and also sovereign states with particular treaties of friendship and good neighbour relations, within the Republic. The timing of this special status proposal was held to be "particularly favourable" because of the excellent relations existing between Great Britain and Italy, whose support Britain was seeking to enter the Common Market. Nor, on the other hand, should Italy find difficulties to express itself favourably on such "a final solution". This had been implicitly said in a recent speech delivered in Malta by the British Governor of the Island. It was believed, finally, that Italy, which had given considerable economic aid to the various peoples of Africa - Tunisia, Somalia and Ethiopia were singled out as examples - "also to counter-balance the increasing Arab nationalism", should not hesitate to lean forward towards "those whom the Italian Constitution considers 'Italian citizens not belonging to the Republic' (Art. 51)."

Some such plan had been hibernating in Mintoff's mind ever since 1946 or 1947. That was before the 1947 general election which the MLP won decisively to form Malta's first Labour Government under Dr Boffa, in which Mintoff became a Minister for the first time. After the Labour Party split in 1949, as a result of which Mintoff ousted Boffa from party leader, there was a conversation between two Boffist

⁹ H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence*, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 249; but see also page 13 of *The Sunday Times*, Valletta, on 14 Aug., 21 Aug., and 28 Aug. 1988.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para 24 and 30.

Ministers, Dr Arthur Colombo and Dr Joseph Cassar, in the presence of Vivian de Gray, then a police superintendent. In the course of this conversation, Mintoff's idea for Malta's integration with Italy had been brought up. De Gray remembered Dr Colombo saying, in Cassar's presence, that one day while they were on a roof-top somewhere, Mintoff had come up with the proposal that "they should integrate with Italy." Colombo added that he had opposed the suggestion, de Gray recalled. The more wily Cassar (who, unlike Colombo, would later join Mintoff's party) had not expressed an opinion on the subject. De Gray was reacting with quick reflexes to a question posed to him by this writer in 1989 as to whether the suggestion that Mintoff may have desired an integration with Italy would surprise him: "*That* does not surprise me *at all!*"¹¹ In recalling Dr Colombo's words, De Gray commented that "probably that was when they were expecting the Communist Party to come to power in Italy."

This off-the-cuff recollection of context is borne out quite well historically by the fact that Nenni, who had become secretary-general of the then pro-Soviet Italian Socialist Party in 1944, was vice-premier in the De Gasperi coalition cabinet in 1945-1946. In 1946-47 he was Italy's foreign minister. Nenni would not assume high political office again until 1963, a comeback which coincided

¹¹ De Gray/Frendo, Casino Maltese, Valletta, recorded interview, 28 June 1989. Vivian De Gray (1912-1995) became Acting Commissioner of Police in 1955 and was appointed Commissioner in 1956, during Mintoff's first premiership. A redoubtable police chief until 1971, he fell out with Mintoff during the rioting in April 1958, preferring to maintain law and order. He became a *bête noir* of the Mintoff party. Arthur (Turu) Colombo (1905-1978), a medical doctor, emerged as the second most popular Labour politician in Malta after Boffa in the 1947 general election, becoming Minister of Finance, Customs and Ports. Expelled from Mintoff's Malta Labour Party in 1949, he was returned for Boffa's Malta Workers Party in the 1950 general election, but he later resigned and retired from politics altogether. Joseph (Ġużè) Cassar (1918-), a lawyer, served as Minister of Justice under Boffa and under Borg Olivier between 1949 and 1953, and again from 1955 to 1958, under Mintoff, whose party he had joined in 1953. He was elected first to the Council of Government in 1945, then served as Speaker from 1946 to 1948. He has held various other senior positions since 1971, including that of Acting President.

with the reawakening of a bee in Mintoff's bonnet. Nenni's return to power pleased the MLP very much.

The alert was first sounded in a secret despatch as early as November 1962. During a sitting of the Legislative Assembly on 5th October 1962, Dr Anton Buttigieg alleged that the (Borg Olivier) Government only paid lip service to Independence. He knew that the Maltese Government had had offers of help from the Italian Government, which was ready to fill the gap if the British were to leave. Borg Olivier expressed surprise at Buttigieg's statement, saying that he knew absolutely nothing of this and denied that Italy had approached his Government in this connection. On 13th October the UK Commissioner attended a large luncheon party at which the Italian Consul, Dr Messina, was present:

In front of other guests I said to him: "Hello, Dr Messina, how is integration with Italy going?" He was so taken aback by this question that he could not open his mouth for several seconds. Then he said: "I suppose you are referring to what was said in the Assembly the other day." I nodded assent, but his reaction to my question convinced me of the truth of reports which had already reached me that Dr Messina has been working on Mintoff, as well as on Borg Olivier, to secure acceptance of the idea of a closer association between Malta and Italy. The object is, I believe, that Malta should enjoy a status similar to that of Sicily or Sardinia.

During his visit to Malta Dr Stolper was reported to have said that Malta was not a viable economic unit and that it must necessarily form part of a larger group. This observation was allegedly interpreted by pro-Italian elements in Maltese society as a hint that Malta should join Italy to secure its economic future. Borg Olivier was leaving for Rome shortly and, Wakefield felt sure, the possibility of associating Malta with Italy would be discussed. Borg Olivier had been at pains to inform him of the subjects which he proposed to discuss with the Italian Government and this "was, of course, excluded from the list." Wakefield had also found out about Mintoff's planned "three week" visit to Italy as a guest of the Italian

Government. As Dr Messina was "in constant touch with Mintoff" it could be presumed that the arrangements for Mintoff's visit had been made by him.¹²

The UK Commissioner believed that all this was relevant to the forthcoming Independence talks. He speculated that Borg Olivier would demand of the UK "terms which are totally unacceptable", so he must have a position "on which to fall back" when his demands were refused. And Borg Olivier was probably planning "an association with Italy as an alternative to Independence within the Commonwealth." Such a project, Wakefield added less fancifully, might well have the support of Mintoff "if Dr Messina's blishments succeed." It would, he reckoned, "also have the blessing of the Church, which would welcome Malta's closer association with a Catholic country." If the Italian Government could be persuaded by the Maltese to offer substantial economic and financial aid, Dr Borg Olivier would be in a position to direct Malta's future away from the British and into the Italian orbit." Borg Olivier's party, he concluded with an old-time flourish, "is traditionally pro-Italian." Borg Olivier would have the backing of the Church; "and Mintoff, he hopes, could be persuaded to give his support to such a *démarche*."

In his covering note on the following day he defined the subject of this secret communcation enclosed in the same despatch as "a move to substitute Italy for Britain as Malta's Protecting Power." The implications of this required study by the Foreign Office and the Service Departments, he advised. The Foreign Office was perhaps particularly concerned "because of the possible effect on British influence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East."¹³

From now onwards the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office consult repeatedly about the suspected goings-on between Mintoff's

¹² ENC., 27 Nov. 1962, sec., Wakefield/Eastwood, 28 Nov. 1962, sec., 472/62 on 926/1876/48489.

¹³ Wakefield/Eastwood, 28 Nov. 1963, sec., 472/62, 926/1876/48489.

party and their Italian contacts. Sir John Ward told Holland Martin, who took him documents from Wakefield, that it would be "most useful if we could maintain direct contact on these affairs". It would be "very helpful if we could be warned whenever any Maltese V.I.P.s are about to visit Italy. "In the present state of relations between Malta and Italy", Ward wrote to Wakefield, "I think it is especially desirable that we should know when your people are coming here. We had no warning of Borg Olivier's visit and only learnt of it through the Italian press." It was agreed that the UK Commissioner in Malta, Sir Edward Wakefield, and the British Ambassador in Rome, Sir John Ward, would start to exchange correspondence directly and to keep each other posted immediately of whatever they could find out about Malta-Italy relations, not only with regard to the MLP but also with regard to the PN.¹⁴ These exchanges concerned Maltese official contacts with Italians and Italian economic and trade relations with Malta, especially "anything in the nature of economic, financial or technical aid and any large Italian investment projects in Malta."¹⁵ This 'early warning' arrangement was later extended by Wakefield being asked by the F.O., in consultation with the C.O., to also share his copy with the Governor and with the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.¹⁶

In reporting to the Foreign Office, Ward partly regurgitated what Wakefield had told him, adding some flavour to the story by putting it into his own words. Maltese politicians could be trying "to use the old threat of some form of link-up between Malta and Italy, as a means of putting pressure on H.M.G. to provide more economic aid." The Italian consul, backed perhaps by certain officials of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seemed to be encouraging them.

¹⁴ Crawley/Fairclough, min., 28 May 1963, 926/1876/48489.

¹⁵ Ward/Wakefield, 4 Jan. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

¹⁶ Overton/Hugh-Jones, 29 Oct. 1963, 926/1876/48489. Ward's reports to Douglas-Home on the internal Italian political situation in 1963 were copied to Dorman, 'Political Reports - Italy' encs., 'G' Files, NAM, ser. 71/63.

"This all sounds credible", he wrote, "and the situation needs to be watched carefully." On the other hand, while he had no information of what passed between Borg Olivier and the Italian Ministers, when Borg Olivier visited Rome at the end of November 1962, it did seem to him "most unlikely that Ministers in the Italian Government, particularly Fanfani, would know anything about these intrigues, still less that they should want to encourage them." The present Italian Government, with all its problems, was hardly likely to want to take on "the virtually insoluble problem of Malta." However, the British ambassador thought it "just credible that in order to keep a finger in the Malta pie, they might respond to pressure from Maltese politicians by offering some form of economic or financial aid to Malta." He wondered how this would be viewed in London but supposed that the C.O. might be happy to take advantage of it to relieve some of the burden of supporting Malta's economy. If some consortium could be set up in which the Italians could play a part, any aid they would be prepared to give to Malta could presumably be "so arranged as to carry no political strings."¹⁷

The British embassy in Rome were requested to find out and report about Dr Borg Olivier's visit to Rome, which took place between 30th November and 3rd December 1962, just before he was due in London for a *tête-à-tête* with Sandys. The visit had been arranged for Borg Olivier by Dr Messina, in accordance with a proper authorization from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The items discussed during the visit were essentially economic in character. Italy was invited to participate in hydro-electric schemes, telephone communications and the tourism industry. The possibility was raised of unemployed Maltese workers, particularly dockyard metalworkers, being absorbed in Italy, as was that of Italian subsidies to the Maltese Government. On the cultural side, it was expected that a number of Italian teachers would probably be sent to Malta, "seeing that up to the end of 1935 Italian was the official language on a par with English." (The Minister of Education, Dr Antonio

¹⁷ Ward/Cheetham, 4 Jan. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

SECRET

THE UNITED KINGDOM COMMISSIONER

Your Reference 472/62.

Reference 472/62.



7, St. Anne Street

Floriana

Malta G.C.

Tel. Central 21285

28th November, 1962.

in Kirch
Pl. -> phone only
B

Dear Chris Zephie

I enclose a note which I recorded yesterday about a move to substitute Italy for Britain as Malta's Protecting Power.

I have known of the existence of this move for some time, but have only recently been in a position to assess its real significance.

As I have said in the last paragraph of the note, I think the implications of this development require study by the Foreign Office and the Service Departments. The Foreign Office are, perhaps, particularly concerned because of the possible effect on British influence in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

M
Church

C. G. Eastwood, Esq., CMG,
 Colonial Office,
 Great Smith Street,
 S.W.1.

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(C 1014/5 (1962))

December 31, 1962.

Dear Mr. Crawley,

I have been asked to write to you about the brief M 10 prepared for the Malta discussions which examines the possibility of association between Malta and Italy.

2. You said on the telephone that in view of the good progress now being made in the constitutional talks with the Maltese you did not at first sight think that there was much likelihood of their wanting any form of association with Italy. It is also difficult to believe that the Italians are seriously considering such a step. They would seem to have quite enough on their hands already with the under-developed areas of Southern Italy and Sicily without burdening themselves with Malta as well. However, it is always possible that national pride might outweigh such economic and social considerations. The last thing we want, particularly in the middle of our E.E.C. negotiations, is a row with the Italians over Malta, and I think we must keep a careful eye on this question.

3. It would be interesting to have your considered views of how far the Maltese are likely to have gone in discussing with the Italians the possibility of some form of association with them and also what you think the likelihood is of this becoming a live issue. We should also of course like to have from you immediate warning of any further developments.

4. I am sending a copy of this letter to Chancery, Rome with a copy of brief M 10. We should of course also welcome any comments or information which they might have.

Yours sincerely,
T.A. Solesby
 (T.A. Solesby) (Miss)

E.W.J. Crawley, Esq.,
 Colonial Office.

Alarm bells rang in some British circles at the prospect that an independent Malta might want "to substitute Italy for Britain" as her "Protecting Power".

Paris, who belonged to the Nationalist old-guard, was keen on upgrading the knowledge and somewhat restituting the place of Italian in Malta.) Most importantly, however, Borg Olivier was received by Fanfani, the Italian Prime Minister, in what was described as lengthy encounter. This by itself was indicative of a marked degree of Italian interest in Malta's fate. Among other things, Borg Olivier asked Fanfani for Italian help "in reaching some arrangement between the Common Market and Malta, independently of English entry into the Common Market."¹⁸ In addition to "a lengthy meeting with the Italian premier", according to the Italian press, and with other Ministers, Borg Olivier also visited some industrial projects in northern Italy.

Besides Borg Olivier's visit to Italy, other contacts during 1962 included two visits by Dr Giovanni Felice, the number two man in the administration. The first of these was in June, when on his way to Brussels for talks in connection with Malta's association with the E.E.C., he stopped in Rome and held talks with Dr E. Ortona, Director General for Economic Affairs in the Italian Foreign Ministry. He was apparently met on his arrival in Rome by Minister Emilio Colombo. The second Felice visit was in November, when he was on his way to Geneva for the 20th Conference of G.A.T.T. (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade body). Dr Felice stopped in Milan where he had discussions "concerning applications for assistance under the Aids to Industries Board from important and potential industrialists." In between, in July, the Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Commerce, Dr Ferdinando Storch, visited Malta, where the Italian Government had a pavilion at the Malta Trade Fair. Storch was accompanied by the President of the Istituto Nazionale per il Commercio Estero, Professor Giuseppe Dall'Oglio. During their stay they paid a courtesy call to Dr Felice in his capacity as Acting Prime Minister.¹⁹

¹⁸ Memo entitled 'Secret. Dr Borg Olivier's Visit to Italy - November 30 to December 3, 1962', enc. 926/1876/48489.

¹⁹ 'Maltese/Italian Official Contacts', enc. 926/1876/48489.

All the indications are that the Borg Olivier administration's advances to Italy were primarily of an economic and particularly of an industrial nature, while at the same time they hoped to get some financial assistance under one guise or another. There were various projects which could be undertaken even jointly: for example, there was so far not even a regular car ferry linking Malta to Sicily. Borg Olivier was keen to see Malta associated as closely as possible with the Common Market as soon as possible but as Britain's entry was being vetoed by De Gaulle's France, he felt he could rely more on Italy than Britain for support in that direction.

Asked to write to the C.O. about the brief M10 prepared "for the Malta discussions which examines the possibility of association between Malta and Italy", a Foreign Office official, Miss T. A. Solesby, registered the opinion that in view of the good progress now being made in the constitutional talks with the Maltese, it was not thought at first sight that there was "much likelihood of their wanting any form of association with Italy." It was also difficult to believe that the Italians were "seriously considering such a step." They seemed to have quite enough on their hands already with the under-developed areas of Southern Italy and Sicily, without burdening themselves with Malta as well:

However, it is always possible that national pride might outweigh such economic and social considerations. The last thing we want, particularly in the middle of our E.E.C. negotiations, is a row with the Italians over Malta, and I think we must keep a careful eye on this question... We should also of course like to have from you immediate warning of any further developments.²⁰

In a follow-up to this, it was noted that discussions with Borg Olivier were proceeding on the understanding that Malta would become

²⁰ Solesby/Crawley, 31 Dec. 1962, conf., 926/1876/48489.

independent within the Commonwealth. It was not inconceivable that if matters did not progress in the way Borg Olivier hoped, and in particular if he were dissatisfied with any financial assistance offered, "he might change his demand to one of independence pure and simple, but this would certainly be an abrupt change in his Party policy." It would, presumably, imply non-membership of the Commonwealth, and would leave open the question of association with any other nation.

Independence 'without strings' is certainly the policy advocated by the Malta Labour Party who are the principal opposition in Malta; they have recently been making reference to the possible advantages of a political link up between Malta and Italy. Some reference has been made to the special relationship existing between Italy and San Marino.²¹

The Colonial Office did not "at present attach much importance to this possibility." If things went smoothly, there would be an independent Malta as a full member of the Commonwealth:

If however we run into serious difficulties as we very well may, then either the collapse of the independence discussions (the most likely possibility) or an attempt, after independence, to establish some form of special relationship with Italy, are both developments which certainly cannot be ruled out. ...it is relevant to remember the strong pro-Italian sympathies expressed by the Malta Nationalist Party in the past, and the present policy being advocated by the Malta Labour Party.²²

²¹ Crawley/Solesby, 25 Jan. 1963, C1014/5 1962; MED 86/436/036, conf., para. 2, 926/1876/48489.

²² *Ibid.*, para. 3.

There was however ample scope under the present constitutional arrangements for Malta to seek and accept aid from Italy should this be forthcoming.²³

Mr Mintoff's secretive enquiries in Italy "about the prospect of an association between Malta and Italy" were known to Archbishop Gonzi as early as 19th January 1963, if not earlier, very probably from Italian sources. Wakefield saw Gonzi on that day and Gonzi told him as much. It seems he also confided to him a little more. Mintoff was allegedly told that the Italian authorities were not prepared to discuss this project with him "until he had made up his quarrel with the Church." Mintoff then was said to have made advances to the Archbishop with a view to a reconciliation. The Archbishop rejected these advances:

The Archbishop told me that, knowing what the standard of living was in Sicily, he could see no advantage to Malta in any form of "integration" with Italy.²⁴

The British embassy in Rome was duly informed by the Foreign Office that on the political side, although the Malta Labour Party seemed "favourably inclined to some sort of tie-up with Italy," the present Maltese Government were "unlikely to want this unless our relations with them were to deteriorate seriously." On the economic side, there was no objection to Italian aid. "There is clearly nothing for us to worry about yet," John Cheetham informed the ambassador, "but we must keep an eye on possible developments..."²⁵

Malta's imports from Italy had actually decreased between 1957 and 1961 from £3,334,000 to £2,974,000, but exports to Italy during the

²³ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

²⁴ Wakefield despatch, 26 Jan. 1963, 926/1876/48489.

²⁵ Cheetham/Ward, 22 Feb. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

same period had more than doubled from £416,000 to £1,083,000. These figures have to be seen in the light of those for imports from Commonwealth and foreign countries, which amounted in 1961 to £29,433,000, and for exports, which amounted in all to £4,646,000. This meant that nearly one-fourth of Malta's total exports by 1961 were starting to go to Italy.

In July 1962 there was talk of Italian interest in establishing a large oil refinery at a cost of £10,000,000, of which £1,500,000 would be provided by the Malta Government as a grant. This never materialised; it was concluded that such an oil refinery project in Malta would be uneconomic. This view was also shared by the UK Government and by the Shell Oil Company. Negotiations for the setting up of an artificial yarn factory employing 400 workers were however progressing. This project had been approved by the Aids to Industry Board in Malta and would shortly go to the London Board; it was hoped that the project would be finalized and sent to the Colonial Office in mid-February 1963. There was also Italian interest in two first class hotels, for which however it was being proposed that the grant should be increased to 33¹/₃% of capital outlay or £580 per bed whichever amount was less.²⁶

While Britain's official line was that there was no objection to Malta seeking alternative routes to assistance by making contacts with countries other than Britain, in fact there always simmered a rather guarded and almost jealous disposition with regard to such advances, be they by Borg Olivier or Mintoff, with Italy, the U.S.A. or anywhere else. This applied particularly to larger projects, some of which could have a direct negative bearing on British interests, such as replacing B.E.A. by Alitalia as Malta's main carrier for instance; but it applied above all to any suggested displacement or upstaging by another country over Britain in Malta on independence. Although Anglo-Maltese relations had become quite close, especially as a result of shared life-and-death experiences and

²⁶ Enc., 926/1876/48489, 'Maltese-Italian Economic and Trade Relations'.

intimacies during the War and the long-standing naval and maritime contacts not infrequently resulting in mixed marriages or life-long friendships, Malta was hardly *sui generis* in this respect. Hence the profound and slightly irrational importance attached by Britain to Commonwealth membership.

In insisting on Malta's membership of the British Commonwealth and on the retention of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as the Queen of Malta, in much the same way as far larger ex-colonies such as Australia and Canada, Borg Olivier was softly softly, not unconsciously, nourishing the soul of a dying Empire badly in need of grace and salvation. Mintoff did the opposite, thereby distancing himself, although in truth he never formally renounced to the possibility of Commonwealth membership after independence.

The Commonwealth was a *continuum*; it assured Britain a place in the world - a different one to be sure, a shadow of Empire. This duality in British approaches to decolonization was a cultural cringe. While decision-makers may have prided themselves on having reared and maybe 'civilized' their colonies all set to go, and here they were proudly letting the doves out, in fact long, delicate relationships, interests and assumptions had matured over time. The act of letting go, with the attendant risks including that of other powers possibly moving into the vacuum left behind, was not bereft of a hidden anguish. It was like a delivery. British embassies were thus very sensitive to what they regarded as the courteous observance of colonial protocol by Maltese politicians or otherwise when on visits abroad. They made it a point in despatches to mention whether these had called at the British embassy or not on arrival, or at some point during their stay, patting them on the head if they had, sneering or hissing if they had not. This applied *a fortiori* to British representation in Italy, where the Maltese felt more at home and could get around more easily through their knowledge of Italian, and for other reasons.

What is surprising is how little the British embassy in Rome actually knew about Italo-Maltese goings-on, especially the MLP overtures. They would get the official programmes of visits, but there was not

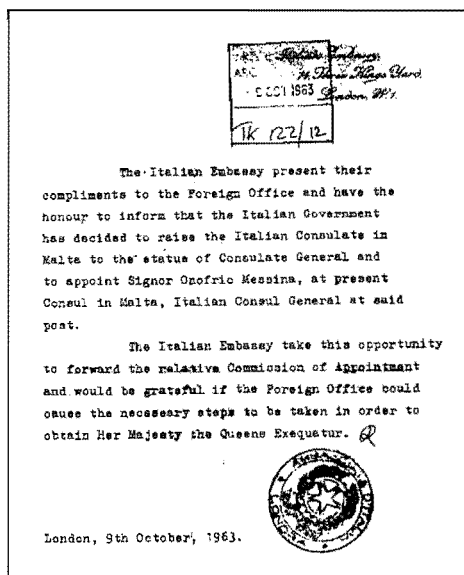
much follow-up as to what actually went on, other than some additional information picked up here and there in conversation or over the telephone. An official programme could be just a cover for other things. They had to be prodded to produce a report on Borg Olivier's visit at the end of 1962 and his meeting with Fanfani. Wakefield seemed to know more about under-currents even in Italy through his informers in Malta and elsewhere, than Ward did through his sources in Italy, which admittedly was a much bigger country with many more things happening all the time. M10, when engaged to look into this Italo-Maltese prospectus, did not come up with very much either, other than straws in the wind.

Piecing everything together, it transpires that the lynch-pin of the operation in Malta was most probably Dr Onofrio Messina, the Italian consul. This assumption was historically a very plausible one and would mirror the inter-war pattern perfectly.²⁷ Dr Messina's efforts could not have been unduly frowned upon by the Italian Government because, again in accordance with past precedent, he was soon raised to Consul-General while still serving in the same posting.²⁸

That however is not to exclude that Messina would have been in touch with Professor A. di Pietro, a Christian Democrat who was Professor of Italian and as such Head of the Department of Italian, at the Royal University of Malta. Keen to restore Italo-Maltese relations after the rupture suffered as a result of the War, Professor di Pietro is known to have met Mintoof on a number of occasions. Wakefield never mentions him, nor does he readily give away his sources on this question. One of them, in January 1963, was

²⁷ On the role of the Italian consul, later raised to Consul General, in Malta, see H. Frendo, 'Italy and Britain in Maltese Colonial Nationalism', *History of European Ideas*, 1992, vol. 15, pp. 733-739.

²⁸ See the relevant *Note Verbale* from the Italian Embassy, London, 9 Oct. 1963, for the F.O. to obtain the Queen's *exequatur*, enc. 926/1876/48489.



A note verbale from the Italian embassy to the Foreign Office asking for The Queen's *exequatur* so that Signor Onofrio Messina could be upgraded from Consul to Consul General in Malta.

Archbishop Gonzi; but Wakefield had been smelling a rat since the Autumn of the previous year. He mentions Dr Messina more than once, yet in quenching Wakefield's burning curiosity, Messina was, understandably, not very forthcoming. As an accredited diplomat Messina met and mixed socially with Wakefield. He was also friendly with his deputy, Ian Watt, sometimes inviting him to the theatre and *soirées*. In a typically condescending cheek by jowl colonial lingo, Watt portrayed Messina kindly and unkindly in the same breath:

Although the Anglo/Maltese establishment out here drop awful hints about what they think Messina may be plotting, there is nothing in the least sinister about him. He is certainly not out to expel the British from Malta, and we get on very well with him. In fact, he is an awful pest, because he badgers us to go to entertainments with him far more frequently than I can bother with. He is a genial bubbling little man, not very bright, and a bit of a clown. However, he does count, as Italian Consul, with the Nationalists and

their supporters here, he is locally popular and we do in fact work in quite well with him.²⁹

Clown or not, in Italian diplomatic circles these MLP *démarches* were a guarded secret and remained so for a quarter-of-a-century. It is telling that when, at long last, an *expose'* appeared in an Italian periodical about aspects of this Italo-Maltese question in 1988, it was a onetime Italian diplomat who was responsible for it, Giuseppe Walter Macotta. This *expose'* also implicated the Governor, Sir Maurice Dorman, who indeed had his own ideas about a post-Independence Italo-Maltese relationship, yet it would be quite wrong to see Dorman as having been in tow with Mintoff.³⁰ A well-meaning dignitary who liked Malta and who in 1967, as Governor-General, would march 'four square' with Maltese protesters against British rundown discharges, Dorman was not one to stand back if he felt he could exercise influence or thought he knew something which others didn't. Being a nosy parker, while assuming a detached air, was his business. The reference in the MLP's April memorandum was to a hint he had dropped in his Candlemas Speech in February 1963, but it was perhaps only natural to assume that Italo-Maltese relations would improve and become closer once Malta was independent. That fell far short of integration or federation.

Mintoff's anticipated visit to Italy took place between the 13th and 28th February 1963. He went to Rome soon after attending the

²⁹ 'Maltese/Italian relations', Watt/Kisch, 8 Apr. 1963, 472/63, 926/1876/48489. On 8 April Messina called Watt to tell him that he was on his way to London at the request of the Italian ambassador there. Watt suspected that Messina had been "given a free ride by B.E.A." who had just inaugurated their new Malta-London schedule "and have been dishing out free rides all round." It was however another timely coincidence, and Messina would also call at the C.O.; Watt hoped they would see him "and treat him nicely".

³⁰ H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence*, *op.cit.*, p. 252, but see esp. Macotta's article in the Jan.-June 1988 issue of *Malta Napoli*, and the three already cited *Sunday Times* articles in Aug. 1988. On what might be called Dorman's Anglo-Italian special relationship idea for Malta, see below, pp. 362-364.

AAPSO conference in Tanganyika. Little was known in Malta about "the real purpose or scope of this visit", but the party's acting leader told the Legislative Assembly on 20th February that Mintoff was "on an extensive tour of Italian industrial plants and he will be using the experience gained in the interests of the nation."³¹

Wakefield wrote no less than three times (on 26th February, 8th March and 12th March) to the British ambassador in Rome to find out what Mintoff was up to in Italy, but Sir John Ward was away from Rome and he did not answer him before 7th May. They had been trying to get information on Mintoff's movements and contacts in Italy but it was "still proving extraordinarily difficult", Ward began. Mintoff had been invited not as Leader of the Opposition or of the MLP but in his capacity as a journalist, more precisely as a "special correspondent" of *The Voice of Malta*, his party's own organ in English. The visit was arranged, through the Italian consul in Malta, with the Press Section of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to Mintoff's official programme, which included two full days spent in the Republic of San Marino, he was to have had meetings in Rome with Confindustria, the Italian Employers Association, and with para-statal industrial organisations including E.N.I. and I.R.I. However, he was due to stay in Rome for five days. On 18th February he had a visit to the port of Genoa and the Ansaldo Shipyards there, and on the following day a visit to FIAT in Turin. From 20th to 22nd February he was in Milan, visiting the *Corriere della Sera*, the heavy machinery and motor manufacturers Innocenti, and the state petrol group E.N.I. at San Dona. He then went to San Marino via Bologna and Rimini. For his stay in San Marino on 23rd-25th February, no meetings were listed in the official programme, although he must certainly have had some there. After San Marino he returned to the Hotel Eliseo in Rome where he stayed for another

³¹ Wakefield/Ward, 26 Feb. 1963, sec. 926/1876/48489. Wakefield was misinformed when in a letter to Eastwood at the C.O. on 26th January he had said that Mintoff had cancelled his plans for a visit to Italy.

three or four days without a fixed programme. "Whether or not he (Mintoff) followed this programme precisely we do not know", the British ambassador informed the UK commissioner, once again disappointingly.³²

On his part, Wakefield had received information, from a confidential source, that Mintoff, when he was in Rome, used the Czech Embassy there as a means of establishing contact with the Russians. He also found out that when the case of Malta had come up before the UN Committee of 24 in May, "the Italian delegate was most helpful in paving the way to a relatively innocuous resolution." Mintoff had been hoping that the Committee would send a fact-finding mission to Malta to enquire into the conduct of the elections held in February 1962.³³

In fact, Mintoff visited Italy, and also Austria, Czechoslovakia and West Germany. He claimed that at the AAPSO conference in Tanganyika he tried to settle the quarrel between the Chinese Communists and the Indians; and that he reproved the Russians for not supporting enough the Maltese bid for Independence in the UN sub-committee. In Rome, Mintoff had discussions with Nenni and with members of the Italian Communist Party. In Vienna and in Bonn he discussed with Austrian and German Socialists the provision of printing machinery for the Freedom Press.³⁴ In Prague, Mintoff described the situation in Malta and discussed the possibility of Czechoslovakia granting aid to an independent Malta, free of Western bases. Mintoff himself referred publicly to his

³² Ward/Wakefield, 7 May 1963, sec. 926/1876/48489.

³³ Wakefield/Ward, 21 May 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

³⁴ The Freedom Press was just being completed at Marsa, largely through voluntary labour after hours and in week-ends, including Sundays, which caused the local church to frown even publicly. (When in power later, Mintoff had the Freedom Press demolished to make way for a ship-building quarter, compensating the MLP for the loss.)

travels and contacts, adding that he was prepared to take delegations elsewhere, including Russia. It was assumed that contacts between Mintoff and the Czechs were first made through the Czech embassies in Rome and in Vienna.³⁵

During a rally in Birkirkara on 10th March, barely a week after his return, Mintoff was translated *verbatim* as having uttered the following words in connection with his visit to Italy (where he was accompanied by the MLP International Secretary Zarenu Dalli):

In Italy we met all the political parties. We told them from the start that we were democratic Socialists and wanted Malta to live in peace... We said that if possible we wanted nobody's forts in Malta because forts have brought us hunger. We said that the Maltese had a right to be like others, to trade with others. They all agreed, from Fanfani's party down to the Communists. They agreed, and promised to work hand in hand to see how Malta, with Italy's help, could regain her strength, and to ensure that they would not have a fortress so close to them which could turn against them.³⁶

This all too familiar Mintoffian manner of address was clearly meant to prepare supporters for a more favourable disposition towards Italy than the MLP had generally tended to demonstrate in the past. It also implied an ideological bias. Historically, forts could be said to have brought Malta soldiers and sailors, ships and wars, but hardly hunger. Theoretically and idealistically, one could argue that the strategic imperative had restricted a more homegrown and, internally, a better sustained and spread economic development. However, the point Mintoff was canvassing here, in his schoolmasterly style reaching down to the lowest common denominator, was not such under-

³⁵ Int., rep., 3 Mar.-1 Apr. 1963, sec., ff. 1-2, para. 5-6, 926/1822/48655.

³⁶ Wakefield/Ward, 12 Mar. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

development theory: it was primarily an ideological standpoint on neutrality depicted as a policy for peace. In this extract the word 'neutrality' was not mentioned; it was probably too conceptual for his audience to grasp so he avoided it. The confusion arises from the presumed Italian help so that Italians would not have fortresses (in Malta) which could turn against them. If this was meant to be an anti-NATO posture, then it was hardly an Italian one, for Italy was a full member of NATO, and HAFMed in Floriana was very much part of the same collective security mechanism. If that was what the Italians had told him, he must have been thinking of Nenni or Togliatti; or was it Nasser and the East Europeans? Mintoff may also have had in mind the provision which would be inserted in the MLP memorandum then being finalised - it was sent out only a few weeks after this public meeting. In it, the possibility was raised "that (in Italy) Malta should remain a neutral territory like Singapore."³⁷

In the last week of February 1963 the Italian Minister for Education, Professor Gui, visited Malta at the invitation of his Maltese counterpart, Dr Paris. The purpose of Gui's visit was to attend the unveiling ceremony of the two Caravaggio frescoes at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta, which had been restored in Italy free of any charge to the Malta Government. Italy had also sent experts for the restoration of Mattia Preti's works in St John's. In recognition of this and other Italian assistance in the artistic, cultural and educational field, Minister Gui was awarded an LL.D. degree *honoris causa* by the Royal University of Malta. In his oration on this occasion, Mgr Edoardo Coleiro, Malta's best-known classical scholar, thanked the Italian nation for the contribution which it had made to the arts and culture of the Western world, as well as for the help afforded "to those of our youths who have sought to continue their studies in Italian universities and academies", as well as for these important works of

³⁷ See para. 26 of the April memorandum, pp. 332-333.

³⁸ Mgr Coleiro (1914-1996) was Professor of Latin, and Head of the Department of Latin and Classical Studies, at the University; he was also much involved in the preservation of artistic works at St John's.

restoration.³⁸ Shortly afterwards, an article by "Cato" (Sir Arturo Mercieca) recalled "the century-old bonds, recorded by history, which have linked together our Islands with our great continental neighbour." The article emphasized Malta's close links - ethnic, cultural, religious, political, artistic, folkloristic - with Italy, and especially with Sicily, throughout the ages. From the fossils of great vertebrates dating back to the quaternary era to megalithic temples of the neolithic age, "Cato" scanned the passage to "the latinity" after the Roman defeat of Carthage and the raising of Malta to a municipal status, the conversion to Christianity during St Paul's shipwreck on his way to Rome in the first century, the barbaric invasions and the conquest of Sicily by the Arabs, wherefrom they extended their domination over Malta:

When their power in Sicily came to nought, Count Roger d'Altavilla delivered the Islands (1090), which thereafter actively participated in the glorious communal life, with the rest of Italy, by virtue of the 'Comune' (Universita') of Sicilian type, as an integral part of the Sicilian Crown's domain. The Normans, the Swedes, the Anjevins and the Aragonese contended with one another for the Sicilian throne, but did not disturb the rhythm of Maltese life, Malta being ever present in all salient moments of Sicilian history. The battle of the 'Vespri', for instance, ended in the waters of our Grand Harbour, when Ruggero di Lauria defeated the Angevins (in June 1283)...

Written with as much sentiment as veracity, "Cato"'s article almost put into question British sovereign rights over Malta, half-implying that these remained Italian. No wonder it made its way to London to sit on the C.O.'s Mediterranean desk for deciphering. It was perfectly timed, too. Here was a noticeable shift, a seeming 'national' convergence, what with Antonio Paris and Edoardo Coleiro - and Dom Mintoff - saying how much Italy could help Malta. Quite apart from references to the Admiral of Frederick II's fleet, Enrico di Malta, or to a 'Tridentine' definition of Malta by Mgr. Royes as the "*Antemurale d'Italia*", or to the qualification of Malta "as an Italian region" in the treaties of 1814 and 1815, the learned correspondent

was not very academic in his opening sentences. Recent events had shown, he said, that the relations between Britain and Italy were "more cordial than what they have ever been." The Italian Government was "warmly advocating the entry of the British nation in the Common Market." The friendly exchange of visits by Mr Fanfani to London and of Mr Macmillan to Rome, and the discussions held between them, "brought to light a perfect unanimity of views on the chief problems of the present day." And finally: "we have had among us, for a couple of days, the guest of our Government, the Italian Minister of Education, Prof. Luigi Gui, who inaugurated the new premises of the local Dante Alighieri."³⁹

Later in the year, Dr Paris, who was in his seventies, returned Gui's visit and was officially decorated by an Italian gold medal in recognition for his services to education and culture. To Wakefield's unremitting chagrin, Paris had in 1962 referred in the Assembly to Malta's "160 years of colonial martyrdom". He was not, therefore, one of his "favourite ministers". A member of the small and diminishing band of senior members of the Nationalist Party, he belonged to "the pro-Italian school of politics."⁴⁰

The British ambassador in Rome was comforted by the news that Gui "did call on the Governor and did comply with the normal rules of conduct" during his Malta visit.⁴¹ However, when Paris went to Rome in October he did not get in touch with Ward - which was just as well because he was away.⁴² Italian was again made a compulsory subject in competitive examinations for clerical appointments in the

³⁹ 'Malta and Italy', by Cato, *The Bulletin*, 25 Mar. 1963, enc. 926/1876/48489. Mr Justice Mercieca (1878-1969) was a long-time president of the Società Dante Alighieri in Malta, and was awarded a gold medal by the Italian Republic in 1961.

⁴⁰ Wakefield/Ward, 24 Sept. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

⁴¹ Wakefield/Ward, 21 May 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

⁴² Ward/Wakefield, 17 Oct. 1963, conf., 926/1876.

civil service, in addition to English and Maltese.⁴³ Replying to Gui's speech of welcome in Rome, Paris said the Maltese felt the need to develop even closer ties with the Italian people. For this reason they needed friends and there was no country in which they felt "more at home than Italy."⁴⁴ The first and last time a Maltese premier had dared express such cordial sentiments towards Italy in Rome, not in an official award ceremony but in an after-dinner speech, he had been forced to resign on returning home. That was in 1923, forty years earlier, and times were slowly changing.⁴⁵

On his return, Paris gave a press conference at the airport. Professor Gui, he said, "intended to investigate the Nationalist Government's wish to improve the study of the Italian language and culture in Malta." Although the English tongue was "of unique necessity to Malta", Dr Paris added, the study of other languages was important and "he hoped that in a gradual manner Italian language and culture would once more assume the position they held in Malta thirty years ago, when Italian was taught as a compulsory subject in the schools as well as English. He hoped that the Italian Government would donate the necessary books." Putting the clock back in this way may indeed have been controversial in some quarters, but Wakefield put his blinkers on in reacting as he did even to the Minister of Education's inauguration of a major Italian archaeological dig starting in Malta at about the same time:

Dr Paris gave additional evidence of his pro-Italian sympathies by having himself photographed swinging a pick

⁴³ Wakefield/Ward, 28 Aug. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

⁴⁴ Ward/Wakefield, 17 Oct. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

⁴⁵ Chev. Joseph Howard was the first Maltese Head of Government from 1921 to 1923, under the internal self-government constitution of 1921. On this incident, provoked mainly by Sir Gerald Strickland and a Stricklandian reporter in Rome, see H. Frendo, 'Early Italian Fascist Influences on Maltese Colonial politics', S. Fiorini and V. Mallia Milanes (eds.), *Malta: A Case Study in International Cross Currents* (Univ. of Malta, 1991), pp. 227-240. The accusation that Howard had met Mussolini was not true.

when an Italian team from Rome University began archaeological work on a site where, apparently, a Professor Cagiano hoped to find traces of Roman and Greek seamen's settlements. It was announced that the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education had helped considerably in sending Dr Cagiano and his colleagues to Malta.⁴⁶

The Cagiano de Azevedo mission's seminal findings were eventually published in Italy in a multi-volume corpus of considerable importance to the existing state of knowledge on Maltese and Mediterranean archaeology.

Dr Felice too kept beaver-ing away at the Italians. In September 1963 Felice was in Italy for UN Conference on Travel and Tourism. He was accompanied by John Pollacco, who chaired the Malta Government Tourist Board; he had also been nominated by the Maltese Government to represent Malta on the UK Delegation to the conference in question. Not being independent, Malta could only be attached to the UK Delegation, like representatives from Gibraltar, Mauritius and Hong Kong. Dr Felice had proved the exception to the usual rule that "Maltese Ministers avoid the British Embassy like the plague", but otherwise the embassy did not see much either of him or, even less, of Pollacco: "maybe they have been jointly engaged in some business with the Italian Government unknown to us, although I think it very unlikely that they will get many tourists from Italy (since Malta is so like the south of their own country) or a great deal of money for developing tourism or anything else, since Italy is going through a rather difficult patch..."⁴⁷

Early in October Felice was also in Italy, where he was again well received. At the end of his visit he announced that later on in the year Professor Nervi, a famous architect, would be coming to Malta

⁴⁶ Wakefield/Ward, 21 Oct. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489

⁴⁷ Ward/Wakefield, 9 Sept. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

in the interests of an Italian syndicate who would be building a hotel there. In London, *The Times* reported the news on 2nd October. "As you know", Wakefield told Ward in mentioning it, "the Nationalist Party... is traditionally pro-Italian."

Its attitude to Britain is ambivalent. Dr Borg Olivier approves the award to Maltese of Italian decorations, but disapproves of British awards! The younger members of the government, however, are less influenced by the old ties with pro-Italian sentiment.⁴⁸

Some top Italian politicians and industrialists were showing an interest in what Malta had to offer. These included the Italian Minister of the Budget, equivalent in Britain to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Giuseppe Medici, and Dr Furio Cigogna, who in addition to being President of Confindustria, headed the textiles division of the powerful Edison Group.⁴⁹

Maltese missions to Italy became a shuttle. No sooner had Paris and Felice returned that a 'Maltese Government Economic Mission' went out for a 12-day visit at the invitation of the Italian Government. The Italian Government even sent an official from the Foreign Affairs Ministry to Malta to travel back to Rome with the delegation. This included senior civil servants together with representatives of the Malta Federation of Industries, the Malta Chamber of Commerce, and the Malta Bankers Association.⁵⁰ It consisted of Alfred Wirth, Wilfred Podesta', Charles Galea Enriquez, Joseph Portelli, Anthony Spiteri Mallia and Louis Vella.

The most senior member was Wirth, the top civil servant in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance since 1959, who had

⁴⁸ Wakefield/Ward, 12 Oct. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489.

⁴⁹ Ward/Wakefield, 17 Oct. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

⁵⁰ Wakefield/Ward, 21 Oct. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

earlier worked as a statistician and census officer. A member of the Aids to Industries Board since its inception in 1959, Wirth participated in a number of government delegations and missions. He was involved in the negotiation of the first World Bank loan to Malta in 1962, and soon enough he would be engaged in the negotiations in the UK leading to the financial agreement with the British government on independence. Podesta' was the Director of Industry since 1962 but he had also served in an acting capacity as chairman of the Aids to Industries Board. Galea Enriquez was a qualified agricultural economist who had studied overseas; he headed the marketing section in the Department of Agriculture and liaised with the Rome-based Food and Agricultural Organisation. Portelli, Spiteri Mallia and Vella represented the three non-governmental organisations, each of which - industry, commerce and banking - was absolutely crucial to any economic rebirth of the country in the nineteen sixties.

Among the leading industries visited by this Economic Mission there were E.N.I. at San Donato, the rubber factory Pirelli, and the Mactes textile machinery plant in Milan; FIAT in Turin; Ansaldo and Nuovo San Giorgio in Genoa; and the steel works and power station at Terni. The mission had been briefed to follow up on points which had been raised during Felice's visits, in particular the procuring of a sea-water de-salting plant, the inclusion of Malta in the Italian tourism programme, the setting up of a car ferry service between Italy and Malta, and the training of hotel industry apprentices in Italy. Other matters indicated for discussion comprised the prospecting for oil in Malta by E.N.I., the granting of a loan to Malta for which the amount so far had not been specified, and the inclusion of Malta in the Alitalia flight network. The most hopeful of these projects seemed to be the start-up of an Italy-Malta car ferry service.⁵¹

The Maltese were very keen to enlist Alitalia's interest to complement - or even to replace - B.E.A. Relations between the

⁵¹ Ward/Wakefield, 29 Oct. 1963, sec., 926/1876/48489. See below II, 13.

Malta Government and B.E.A. were very strained and the Malta Government would like "to break B.E.A.'s present monopoly of air services to and from Malta." Strangely, Salvino Mizzi, Secretary for Industrial Development and Chairman of the Aids to Industries Board since 1962, was said not to have heard either of Dr Cicogna or the Edison group in connection with Chatillon or any other Malta project.⁵²

During a high level meeting with Confindustria which Wirth addressed for the Maltese side as the Acting Financial Secretary, the changing politico-economic position of Malta was explained in detail, as were the incentives which Malta was offering to attract industries, with a view to bringing this to the notice of Italian industrial concerns. The development programme envisaged for the period 1964-1969 provided in the main for generous assistance to be given to firms wishing to set up industries. The initial phase of the development plan provided for £3 million to be spent on such assistance, and later on a further £6 million would be forthcoming. Such firms could get from 33% to 50% of the cost of construction of new industrial plant in Malta, and tax exemption for a period of ten years. Machines imported up to a value of £3,000 would be exempt from customs duty, and there would be reduced rates for values exceeding this. The areas set aside for industrial construction were in the neighbourhood of the port and some two miles away from it. Among the Italian firms which had already accepted the Maltese invitation were Chatillon and Ignis Synthetic Fibres.⁵³

Questioned over Anglo-Maltese relations, the members of the mission remained unperturbed. They asserted that everything was going smoothly with the British government and they had every hope that once independence was achieved, their association with Britain within the Commonwealth would give "security and stability"

⁵² Wakefield/Ward, 6 Sept. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489. See below II, 13.

⁵³ On economic diversification see below II, 13.

to their economy. Wirth noted that of the 12,000 men previously employed by the naval dockyard, 6,000 had been discharged. The training of this labour force, Wirth added, would be carried out by government through the medium of technical schools at various levels. He pointed out that the problem of unemployment could only be solved by setting up new industries. The Maltese government had "great hopes" of increasing its tourist trade and was extending and modernising facilities for tourists. Mr Wirth gave the meeting to understand that Malta was not expecting any aid from the Italian government, except perhaps "the gift of a ferry-boat."⁵⁴

Another interlocutor in Rome in this domain, later on in the year, was Dorman, who had gone to Rome mainly for his audience with the Pope.⁵⁵ However, he also called on Signor Fornari, the Director-General of Political Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at which a number of other Italian officials were also present. In this meeting, Dorman was accompanied by Mr D. S. Laskey from the British embassy.

After explaining the serious balance of trade problem Malta had and how unemployment would be rising as a result of the rundown of the British services, he flew his kite about should-be Italo-Maltese relations in the near future. In his view, Malta should have "a special relationship both with the U.K. and with Italy." This would be "a natural arrangement" and he saw no difficulty arising on the part of H.M.G. about the establishment of "such a relationship between Malta and Italy."

Malta had now lost much of its strategic importance but it was in the interest of NATO, and particularly of our two countries, that the island should be reasonably content and not a source of disturbance.

⁵⁴ Ward/Wakefield, 21 Nov. 1063, conf., 926/1876/48489.

⁵⁵ On this see above, I, 10.

As regards the role which Italy could play, Dorman said that he hoped the Italian authorities would make clear to visiting Maltese Ministers the sort of aid which Italy might be able to provide and also the limits to what Italy could do. The Maltese had, he told the Italians, "a very exaggerated idea about the readiness of foreign countries to provide all sorts of assistance as soon as the island became independent." He also hoped that Italy could take a share in Malta's industrial development. A start was being made by the factories under construction - Chatillon was mentioned yet again - and there were three Italian groups interested in hotel development.

Fornari thanked Dorman for his explanation and said that Italy was certainly sympathetic to Malta's needs:

In present circumstances Italy could not contemplate cash grants and there were difficulties about meeting Maltese requests for loans at very low rates of interest. There was however a project for running a car and passenger ferry from Siracusa to Malta and he hoped that this would be approved by the new Italian Government.

Fornari thought there were prospects for developing tourism and that Italians might well be able to help over this. It might well be possible, too, for some unemployed Maltese to go and work in Italy. As the shortage of trained workers in Italy increased, there might well be openings for Maltese. Asked about the political situation, Dorman said that the present Prime Minister, Mr Borg Olivier, was pro-Western and this was also true of the majority of Maltese. Mr Mintoff was not, he thought, a Communist "but he was certainly an opportunist and would not refuse Russian help if it was offered."

Dorman also used his visit in Rome to meet with the Italian Chief of Army Staff, General Alcia, and the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Giuriati, at a reception held at the British embassy, and spoke in similar terms about maintaining Malta's connection with the West. He considered it very important that the NATO command should remain in Malta. He was not concerned with the NATO command structure

or the nationality of the Commander, but he thought that if the Command were ever moved from Malta, for example to Naples, "this would be taken by the Maltese to mean that they had been abandoned by NATO." General Alcia said that he personally strongly endorsed these views and was sure that all responsible people in Italian government and Service circles were of the same opinion. He was delighted to hear such views from Sir Maurice himself. Admiral Giuriati on the other hand was a good deal less receptive.⁵⁶

Before Christmas, Sir John Ward visited Malta and held meetings with leading personalities on the Island, with Dorman's assistance. It was agreed that he should also call on the Leader of the Opposition. From the descriptions given it would seem that Lorry Sant and Attard Kingswell also sat in during the meeting. Mr Mintoff received Sir John in a friendly way albeit with a certain reserve, but was at pains not to embarrass him in any way throughout the conversation:

He did not mention by name Archbishop Gonzi, but he said that the whole political and social situation in Malta was false and out-of-date, based on a tyranny by the Church which was bound soon to come to an end as it had done long ago in most other countries. He implied that it was only the Church and its interference in political affairs that stood between the Labour Party and victory.

When Ward said that in touring around he had been quite impressed by the development of both tourism and light industry, Mintoff said it was all "quite uncoordinated and inadequate." A really proper plan was needed for the industrial development of the island and this should be put through with the utmost energy and speed since the situation was becoming desperate. Malta could not compete for mass tourism, he held, but should go for the better

⁵⁶ Laskey/Cheetham, 25 Nov. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489. On Malta-NATO relations, see esp. below, II, 15; and III, 16.

educated middle-class tourists who anyway brought in most money. Emigration he condemned as "bleeding the island to death by taking away its best people."

Ward was greatly taken aback when Mintoff said that independent Malta in future should have five diplomatic missions: London, Rome, Washington-New York, Moscow and Peking:

When he mentioned Peking, I commented that it seemed an awful long way from Malta; but he replied that these days it was essential to be represented in Peking. Although he did not repeat to me his alleged remark that he would turn to the Communists if he could not get the economic help that Malta needed from Britain or the United States, it was fairly obvious what was on his mind....

With regard to Italy, Ward said that he had seen the site of the new Chatillon factory and hoped that there might be more similar initiatives from Italy, which was now suffering from a labour shortage. Mintoff replied that Italian interest in Malta had so far been "disappointing" and "they had failed to come forward as he had hoped." He mentioned in particular that since the death of "his friend' Enrico Mattei, the E.N.I. had been elusive. Ward thought that the Italians were understandably cautious about their relations with Malta "since they did not wish to give the impression that they were returning to Fascist policies."

Mr Mintoff disagreed and said that the reason why Italy was not showing more interest in Malta was that she did not wish to get foul of the British Government. While he did not say so in so many words, it was clear that he was implying that H.M.G. were holding Italy back from helping Malta.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ 'Note on Conversation with the Leader of the Opposition of the Malta Labour Party in his room at the Parliament Buildings in Malta, December 14, 1963', conf., enc. Collings/Kisch, 23 Jan. 1964, conf., 926/1876/48489. Ward's minutes of his meeting with Mintoff were dated 31 Dec. 1963.

Ward did not agree with Mintoff's assessment which, however, could well have been the more sensory. Mintoff was disappointed by Italy. It was as if he felt let down.

Did those who had been keen to put Italo-Maltese relations on an integral footing been dissuaded or nudged into a standing or cooling off? What had become of that April memorandum? The Republic of San Marino? And the autonomous regional government alternative? Neither Ward nor Mintoff said anything about it. Had the whole project been stopped in its tracks by someone? Had the party itself thought better of it? The British certainly were not pleased with it: it put them on alert, they started enquiring, watching out, warning one another. Even the Nationalists came under suspicion through occasional and dated skeleton-in-the-cupboard allusions. Perhaps the higher echelons in the Italian Government did not go along with it when they found out about it, or saw it as premature. Contrary to what Sir Edward Wakefield had conjectured behind his back, Archbishop Gonzi had told him forthrightly that he knew about it and disagreed with it. He saw no advantage to Malta in it; Sicily was worse off. (He may also have been less sure of "Catholic Italy" than Wakefield had readily assumed.) If Gonzi knew about this, Borg Olivier must have known about it too, although, if so, he certainly did not play it up. If the Independence negotiations were stalling it was largely because the church would not give way on any count. It would have been highly impolitic to introduce an additional irritant, extraneous to the matters at hand. Had "the tyranny of the Church" intercepted this volley as well, thereby preventing the Maltese from becoming (in the stinging words of one correspondent) "Sicilians of the South"?⁵⁸ (And simultaneously in that eventuality, one might add, full members of the EEC.) But that MLP volley was itself hypothetical, it was a side show, and an exploratory one at that. Any fear by the British of such a Maltese fall-back position, real or imagined, could once more have served as grist to Borg Olivier's mill. As no doubt did Mintoff's adventurous neutralist stance, the hob-knobbing with dubious leftists and

⁵⁸ H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence*, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

revolutionaries. The Antonio Paris 'pro-Italian' posture was tangential in post-war Malta: to read too much into it would be misleading. In any case, colonialism was coming to an end.

Towards the conclusion of his meeting with Ward, Mintoff became a bit worked up about the alleged injustices to his party and said that the British government were "making a big mistake by thinking that they could fix with Dr Borg Olivier, and his Church-dominated Government, the future relations between the U.K. and Malta."

He asserted that he had during his recent visit to London told Mr Duncan Sandys to his face that when the Labour Party came into power in Malta they would repudiate the Defence Agreement and any other Anglo-Maltese agreements that were being negotiated with the present Government of Malta and that these agreements would then have to be negotiated all over again.⁵⁹

Symptomatic of this and simultaneous with it was the Italian concern that Malta should join the Council of Europe immediately upon becoming independent. The Deputy U.K. representative in the Council of Europe, Jasper Leadbitter, reported to the Foreign Office a conversation he had had with his Italian colleague about relations between the Council of Europe and Malta after Malta became independent in 1964. The Italian government were "anxious that Malta should be brought into the Council of Europe as soon as possible after independence."

The Italians fear that Yugoslavia, or possibly one of the East bloc countries, will try to bring Malta into the Communist orbit, and they therefore consider it important that the island should come under the influence of a Western organisation as soon as possible.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ 'Note on Conversation with Leader of the Opposition...', *op.cit.*, f. 3, para. 9.

⁶⁰ Sprague/Vaughan, 26 Nov. 1963, conf., 926/1876/48489.

In deliberating on how to reply to the Foreign Office about this advance, the Mediterranean desk would have given "a more forthright reply" had they been certain "that no elections will take place before independence", since Dr Borg Olivier had already indicated his intention to align with the West:

Now that there is the possibility of elections we cannot disregard the possibility of Mr Mintoff being returned however slight this may be. On balance, the prospects of Malta remaining with the West are infinitely better than her falling to the Communist bloc if only because of the influence of the Church.⁶¹

The Strasbourg approach was being considered in the wake of the just failed second round of Maltese all-party consultations in London, in the course of which the Mintoff, Pellegrini and Ganado parties seemed to team up in favour of fresh elections, if only to force a referendum in the end. But there was also Borg Olivier's threat, made to Sandys, that if the dockyard workers were sacked indiscriminately or arbitrarily, without consultation with the Maltese government, he would "resign at once".⁶²

As to "the likely relations between the Council of Europe and an independent Malta", therefore, the Colonial Office couched their response in the following terms. The present Government of Malta had openly proclaimed itself as favouring closer relations with the West. This attitude was shared by the three smaller Opposition parties. The main opposition party, the Malta Labour Party, however, "publicly favours a neutralist policy and is apparently prepared to deal wherever it can obtain the best terms." It was not yet clear whether or not independence would be preceded by elections but in any case it seemed "unlikely that the Malta Labour

⁶¹ Min., Crawley/Jenkins, 11 Dec. 1963, 926/1876/48489.

⁶² See above, I, 8.

Party could win a clear majority in the Legislature in the immediate future." Moreover, they added, one must take into account the fact that the Roman Catholic Church exercised a very strong influence in Malta "so that it is difficult to foresee the country ever coming wholly under the influence of the Communist bloc."

On balance, we would therefore expect Malta to continue to align itself with the West after independence and to seek membership of or association with Western organisations.⁶³

The Foreign Office delved further into the matter, following it up with despatches and telegrams to their diplomatic staff in Rome. A meeting on Malta, which was also attended by Bernard Ledwidge from the Foreign Office's Western Department in London, was therefore held with Signor Gaja and other officials of the Italian Foreign Ministry as Malta's Independence approached. The Italians were keen to be informed and updated on how Malta's approaching independence was proceeding and of the exact date for which it was now earmarked.

Precious little Italian economic help had materialised so far. Even the Siracusa-Valletta ferry service had been turned down by the Italian financial ministries for the time being, in spite of the backing it had from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and indeed from the British, who argued that even a small measure of aid could help "in maintaining a Western orientation in Malta."

On the question of the NATO base, the British side explained that it had some economic importance for the Maltese,

but was even more important psychologically, as its removal might give the Maltese the impression that they were being abandoned by the West. Gaja said that while the Italians would prefer on practical grounds to have only one NATO

⁶³ Jenkins/Sprague, 24 Dec. 1963, MED.86/8/073, conf., 926/1876/48489.

headquarters, i.e. the headquarters at Naples, they recognised the arguments for continuing a headquarters in Malta, and would agree provided that the question of command could be settled in a way satisfactory to Italy.

Mr Ledwidge said that the Italian position was understood in London and was being taken into account "in current studies of future defence arrangements in the island."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Laskey/Ledwidge, 10 June 1964, sec., 926/1876/48489.

The Push to Diversify the Economy

INDUSTRY, TOURISM, EMIGRATION

Given her dependence on British and Imperial naval, maritime and infrastructural priorities for so long, the forecasts for successful economic diversification in the early Sixties were glum if not catastrophic. Both the Stolper and Joint Study investigations concluded that the multiplier effect of the British Services Rundown in drastically reducing jobs and expenditure within a few years, could only be counter-balanced by a major injection of capital investment in manufacturing industry, tourism and to a lesser extent in agriculture. In addition, however, tens of thousands of people would be expected to emigrate from the Maltese Islands over a decade, thereby negating population growth, and indeed depopulating. As the projections set by the first five year development plan starting in 1959 had not materialised, the Borg Olivier administration, with British assistance, tried hard to make good for the losses being incurred by the Rundown through a steady push for diversification. The worst scenario sometimes contemplated in British circles was that in decolonizing the Maltese would suffer great economic hardship: in spite of mass emigration, there would be a marked drop in living standards and even rampant poverty.

Unsustainable economic hardship would in turn cause internecine fighting and political instability, thereby necessitating British intervention to restore order and to sort things out.

While little if any progress was being registered among the Maltese parties on the political front, efforts to revamp and redirect the Maltese economy were moving ahead. This push for economic diversification was urgently necessary in the short-term to combat the rundown, but it was also necessary in the long-term to render future development less dependent on British spending and shrinking Imperial needs in a world that was fast changing, making new demands. Malta had to get out of her colonial cocoon, and quickly. While fluctuations, external and internal, could not be excluded from any economic plan, it was clear that development had to be more 'home-grown' and 'rationalized' on a sounder footing. The hope was that such a diversification could be accomplished in substance and in time, thereby permitting further generation of investment and restructuring to create new employment openings.

With doom and gloom being preached all round - from Stolper to the Joint Report to Dorman's Candlemas speech of February 1963 - the task ahead was indeed an arduous one requiring as much ingenuity as faith.¹ The smaller parties, among others, did not think this task was achievable, certainly not before quite some time and with a heavy helping hand from Britain. Stolper's estimate that 10,000 Maltese would have to emigrate every year might have served as a temporary safety valve, difficult though it was to realise in practice. Were such a sustained export of native souls to materialise, it would gradually empty Malta of her people, losing to her also many residual skills and human resources. That need not have meant a greater resourcefulness, productivity or success in rising to such challenges as were now facing the country, survival obviously being one of them. Emigration was necessary, but by itself

¹ Specimen multiplier calculations and projections are being published here to give an idea of pre-Independence diffidence (see the adjoining tables).

it would serve no profitable purpose other than to deplete and to depopulate. It was at best only a temporary expedient, a safety valve until the economy could be productively and creatively restructured.

Although there had been noteworthy reports outlining economic development needs by experts such as Woods, Schuster, Balogh and Seers, economic planning in Malta only began seriously in the late 1950s by means of the first five-year Development Plan. Safe and assured employment had to be replaced, it held, by "employment in the world of competition"; which meant that Malta's still largely traditional economy had to transform itself in a short time. Some of the projects earmarked for tackling during the span covered by that Development Plan, from 1959 to 1964, showed how basic some of Malta's infrastructural needs were: pumping water; generating electricity; bottling gas; extending telephones; a grain silo; a deep-water quay; a new power station; machinery and equipment; adequate roads to cater for the increasing traffic; technical and vocational education to supplement the academic and professional; and not least of all, the modernisation of the dockyard to build as well as to repair ships and to cater for oil tankers - and somehow to start doing so commercially and competitively.

Malta-made goods had to be as good as any others, or better - and the Maltese themselves had better believe it. Local prejudice against local produce had to cease, but that could only happen if the quality was good. The capital investment intended for this plan to work, most of it to be forked out by Britain, amounted in all by mid-1961 to some Lm32,000,000, the largest single chunk of Lm19,250,000 being from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund.²

There was much 'institutional' infrastructure to be put into place too, starting perhaps with the mission assigned to the Aids to Industries Board, which started operating successfully under the Aids to

² See above, I.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

- a) The problem of Malta is in some ways like that of the United Kingdom depressed areas in the 1930's, but there are gravely aggravating circumstances (paragraphs 1-4).
- b) Expenditure by the United Kingdom Services in Malta provides employment directly for 23 per cent. of the gainfully occupied population, about a third of the Maltese national income, 56 per cent. of Malta's earnings of foreign exchange, and a substantial part of Government revenue. There are further indirect effects on all of these (paragraphs 5-11).
- c) Direct Services expenditure in Malta is expected to fall by £10 million by 1967 (paragraph 15).
- d) This reduction in expenditure, taken in isolation, might lead to a fall in the national income of a third, to a drop in Malta's overseas earnings equivalent to 30 per cent. of Malta's current imports, to a drop in employment of some 10,000 and to great difficulties in balancing the Government's budget (paragraphs 16-29).
- e) As a result of other factors operating during the same period, some 1,470 new jobs would have to be provided by 1967. Furthermore, the 1961 level of unemployment will have to fall by some 1,500 workers to reduce unemployment to 3 per cent. of the labour force (paragraphs 31-36).
- f) New developments in the rest of the economy might be expected to provide some 5,500 additional jobs by 1967, and £3.4 million in additional net output. These figures are very small in relation to the needs of the economy (paragraphs 37-54).
- g) Emigration up to 1967 might amount to 20,200 net of returned emigrants of whom 10,100 will be persons seeking gainful employment. In addition there might by 1967 be outlets for 1,500 workers going abroad on contract (paragraphs 56-69).
- h) In all, unemployment in 1967, is expected to total some 20,000 on fairly favourable assumptions and 29,000 on less favourable assumptions (paragraphs 72-73).

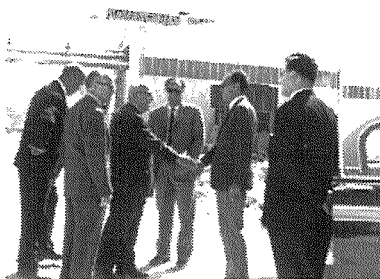
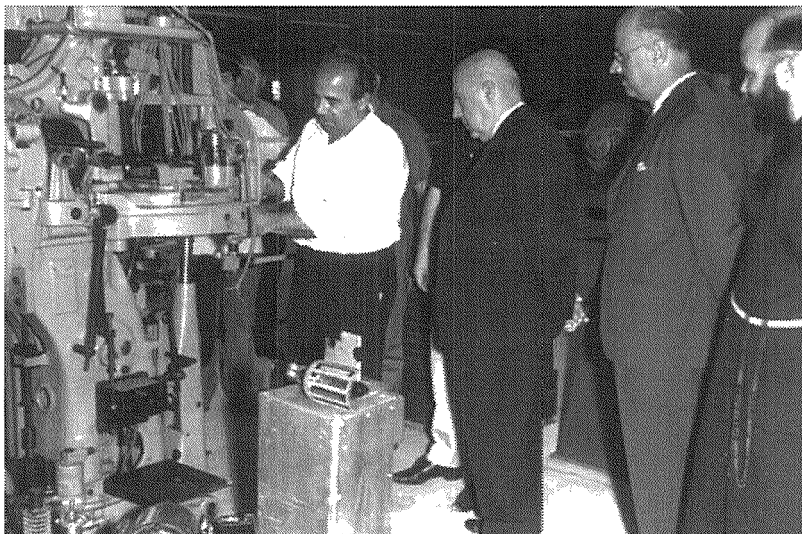
VI. CONCLUSION

79. Our analysis shows that, even on fairly favourable assumptions, there will be an unemployment level of nearly 20,000 in 1967 and possibly some 29,000 on less favourable assumptions (paragraph 72); that the national income will probably fall by rather more than 15 per cent. (paragraph 76) and that Government will be in severe financial difficulties. In other words, the favourable developments which we foresee by 1967 and the measures that Malta can take over this period will in no way make good the loss of jobs brought about by the Services rundown. If unemployment is to be reduced to 3 per cent. of the labour force in 1967, the balance of new jobs which would have to be provided would be 10,640 on our more favourable assumption (paragraph 71) and appreciably more on our less favourable assumption. Thus, even on our more favourable assumption, the rate of provision of new jobs would have to be treble that assumed in Table A unless the rate of emigration exceeds the numbers assumed in paragraph 66.

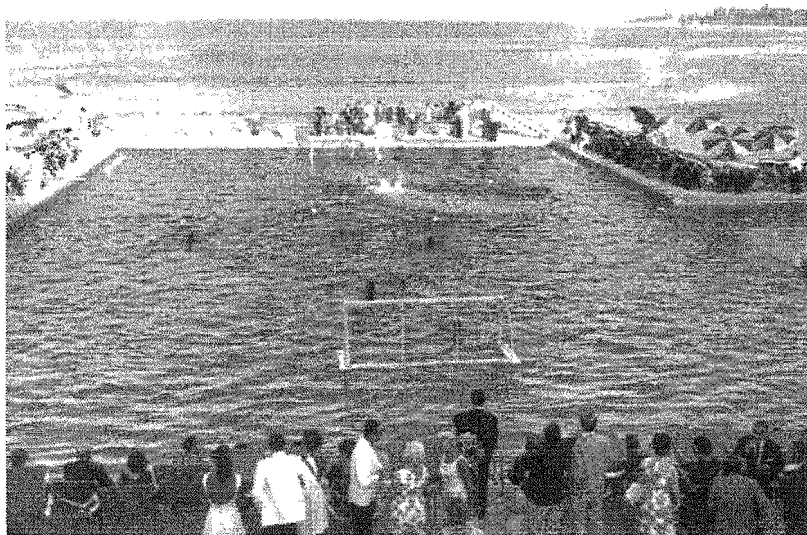
80. In Malta's case there is the additional difficulty that new jobs which need to be created must be predominantly in export industries^{on industries} producing goods which otherwise would have to be imported. Projects which do little to increase Malta's exports (or to replace imports) would, if adopted on any appreciable scale, rapidly provoke balance of payments or financial difficulties. (Our calculation in paragraph 78 implies that a project directly providing £100 of additional income leads to an increase in imports of no less than £44).

81. We understand that the Maltese Government, with the technical assistance of the United Nations, will shortly be preparing a development programme for the period beginning in 1964. The United Nations T.A.O. mission will doubtless wish to examine the specific points we have noted in Section V of our report and to reconsider our general appraisal of the situation.

Part of the summary in the Joint Study Report based on a multiplier approach.



The Minister responsible for industrial development, Dr Giovanni Felice, inspecting some of the new manufacturing industry developments (left) which were being built or just coming into operation during the early 1960s in Marsa, Mosta and elsewhere in sites earmarked as “industrial estates”; and (right) hotels in the process of construction such as the Hilton, Preluna and Dragonara, with novel leisure and entertainment facilities, especially in the Sliema/St Julian’s area and along the northern bays.

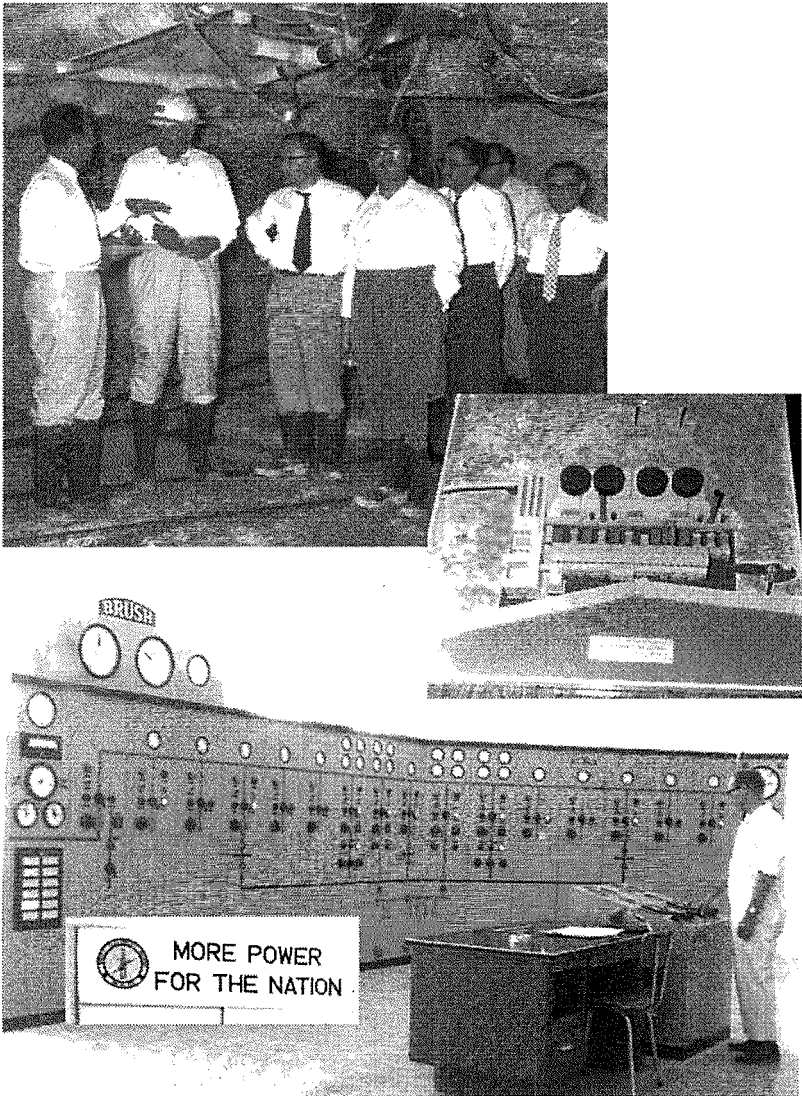


Industries Ordinance, 1959. In the early Sixties the promotion of Maltese commerce and industry had a London manager in the person of Commander John B. Mattei, a Cambridge graduate and mechanical engineer who was attached to Malta Government House in Haymarket, London, S.W.1.³ He worked from a separate office but in liaison as necessary with Malta's 'Commissioner General' in London, John Axisa (who later became Malta's first High Commissioner there).⁴ A Tourist Board was also set up in the late fifties, complementing Aids to Industries. Led by John Pollacco, George Fabri and others in the Sixties, this Board started to develop and package the very concept of Malta as a tourist destination. Whether by grant, soft loan or other inducements, including labour which was available and trainable, factories and hotels started being attracted to set up shop in Malta. Attempts were also made to modernize agriculture and fisheries.

By the first quarter of 1963, new industries for which grants had been approved included production areas such as knitwear, two firms would manufacture spring interior mattresses, and another rubber seals. Projects were taking off in specialized horticultural processes. Two firms went into plastics, another two were producing detergents, yet another two concentrated on frozen foods. There were firms making iron and steel bars and rods, silver-plated tableware, wrought iron goods, and jewellery, thus to some extent drawing on traditional craftsmanship and expertise. There was also diamond cutting. Five factories concentrated on textiles, the largest of them being Chatillon, which received a grant of over £600, 000.

³ See his exchanges with Edgar Cuschieri, Administrative Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Dr Victor Ragonesi, Borg Olivier's public relations secretary, e.g. Mattei/Cuschieri, 6 May 1963, Mattei/Ragonesi, 23 Apr. 1963, Ragonesi/Mattei, 6 May 1963, as well as the comments by the Financial Secretary, Alfred Salomone, on Major Patrick Wall's paper 'Malta 1961-1963' enc. in Salomone/Ragonesi, 29 Apr. 1963, Archives in the Office of the Prime Minister, Auberge de Castille, Valletta.

⁴ Axisa/Frendo, 2 July, 1999; and see below, III, 17.



Modernization plans employing greater mechanization and technology comprised energy, particularly the new water and power station project, as well as agriculture and fisheries.

In addition, others started producing gloves, underwear, children's clothing.⁵ Fibreglass production commenced. Bacon and pork products started being made more professionally and on a larger scale locally, which necessitated pig-breeding farms. Model hobbies, marble cutting, type-setting, freight and passenger services featured in a row - the altogether new with the not-so-new.

There was an upgrading or reorientation of existing industry, such as the production of Maltese wines "for export". Cottage industries or production only for local consumption, such as matches and candles, had to change gear altogether if they wanted to expand or indeed to survive.⁶ For most of these products export was the key, the Maltese market being too small to sustain their growth, if not their existence. They would thus become important sources of foreign earnings and exchange, in a country which had always relied very much on imports.

Since December 1959 industrial grants had amounted to £1.5 million, including the Chatillon grant. By mid-1963 Malta had 24 new industries in operation employing 1,300 persons, soon expected to become 2,000. Thirteen factories were built by the Government and a further eight were earmarked for completion by December 1963. While it was just impossible, without emigration, for employment to aspire to somehow keep up with the pace with discharges from the Services, new and differently tailored jobs were nonetheless becoming available on the market, new skills were also being learnt. To increase the tempo, Dr Stolper recommended the

⁵ For a study of Malta's textile industry as this developed, see John C. Grech, *Threads of Dependence*, (Univ. of Malta, 1978).

⁶ For a surprisingly long list of local products see the insightful chapter 39 in Canado, *op.cit.*, 'Industrijalizazzjoni', pp. 431-442. The list included mortadella, salami, pasta, bacon and ham, sweets, tinned fruits and vegetables, olive oil, candles, matches, flour, paper bags, shoes by Cardona, paint and plastics, Guillaumier's glass and mirrors, shirts, nails, *Gozitano* tomato paste, clothes, Marsovin wines, Farsons beer...

setting up of a Development Corporation, which was indeed set up afterwards. Of major importance eventually would be the Free Port project at Kalafrana, which was already envisaged during the Independence negotiations.⁷

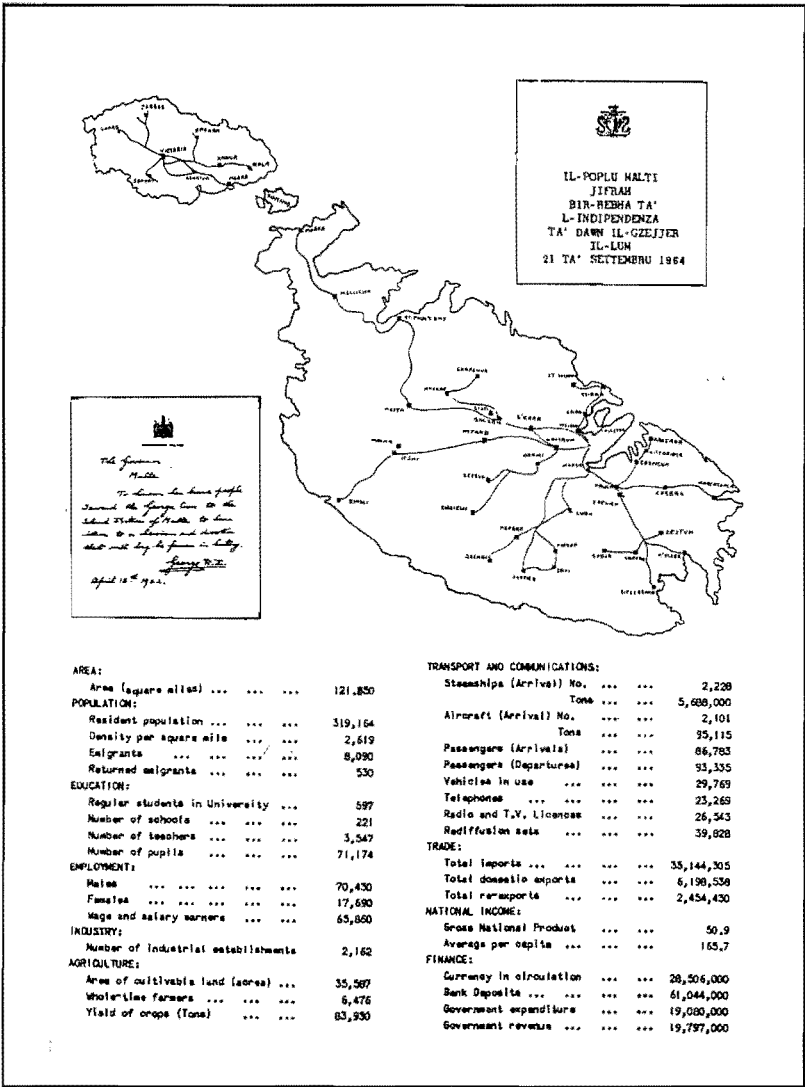
Services too had always been important for Malta, even if these were now a-changing. For generations, much 'invisible export' had derived from services - from bunkering to chandling, *entrepot* to entertainment. In the 19th century there were several small hotels, inns and guest houses in Valletta, as well as bars and night spots, but it was not until the construction of the Phoenicia Hotel was embarked upon by the Strickland family and completed after the war, that Malta could boast of a proper first class hotel, within walking distance of the capital. An international table comparing tourist traffic flow in the Mediterranean in 1960 showed Malta practically at the bottom of it, after Cyprus, Tunisia, Gibraltar, Monaco, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Greece, San Marino. The leading tourist countries were Italy and Spain, followed by France, Egypt and Yugoslavia.⁸

Before Independence, tourism was slowly but surely becoming the most promising of the 'services' offered by Malta, as other hotels sprouted in the 1950s along the Sliema front.⁹ Thus by mid-1963 grants had been approved for hotel projects in Sliema, at Dragonara

⁷ See below, III, 16.

⁸ E. J. Spiteri, *An Island in Transition*, *op.cit.*, p.56.

⁹ For period enquiries outlining the situation in industry see e.g. Halt-Arnold *et al*, *An Industrialisation Study of the Maltese Islands* (Battelle Institute, Geneva, 1964) which advised soft loans rather than outright grants. On tourism one of the first seminal studies is Lino Spiteri's in 1968 which underlined the need for a master plan for tourist development. For a brief historical overview see H. Frendo, "Tourism: Neocolonialism?" (mimeographed, Univ. of Malta, 1977); other more comprehensive studies have since been conducted by J. Boissevain, an anthropologist; J. Inguanuez, a sociologist; E. Delia, an economist; and some others.



The first 'patriotic' page of the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* for 1965, published by the Department of Information, gave a bird's eye view of Malta's general condition as she embarked upon an independent existence.

Point in St Julians and on the island of Comino. For the Dragonara a Kursaal project was making progress, with German interests and including the British M.P. Sir Victor Raikes. Malta's oldest-established quality hotel, The Phoenicia, put in for an extension, as did the *Côte d'Or* Hotel in Golden Bay. Other hotels sprouting by the seaside in the early sixties were at Paradise Bay, Cirkewwa and St George's Bay. The most ambitious and alluring touristic project of all, at this time, was that for a Malta Hilton, an American-related initiative. Of the £700,000 approved for hotel projects so far, £375,000 went to the Hilton project. Also important was the plan for a yacht marina, and the liaison being established with the UN technical assistance programme, including the assignment of Italian experts. Assistance under the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund was being sought for the marina as well.¹⁰ Other projects in the pipeline often involved Maltese entrepreneurs and capital, including loan capital, especially through the National Bank of Malta. Many of these dreams later materialised, thrived and even expanded as Malta gradually became established in the tourist market - the Corinthia Hotel in Attard which began at this time and in this way would later pioneer the first and so far the only international Maltese-owned hotel chain - but the early Sixties were still a tentative beginning. Few could have been too sure of what the risks at stake were or not.

A roll call of existing hotels which in 1963 asked for aid to upgrade, refurbish, extend or otherwise improve their premises and services mainly during 1964, gives an idea of the progress being registered in Malta's tourist industry and its onward movement. It gives a better idea of how much more still needed to be done. The largest amounts ranging from over £10, 000 to less than £30, 000 were requested by the Phoenicia in Floriana, the Solemar at Marfa, the International Students' Centre at Bugibba, the Duke of Edinburgh in Victoria, Gozo, the Imperial and the Sea Cliff in Sliema. Smaller amounts were applied for by some of the smaller Valletta hotels - the

¹⁰ See the notes and the lists enclosed under 'Industrial and Tourist Development', 29 May 1963, 926/2080/48543.

Coronation, the Crown, the Cumberland, and the Midland. Sliema and the island of Gozo featured prominently, an indication of things to come. In Sliema, there were the Metropole, the Plevna, the Savoy and Tigne'; while two more were existing Gozitan enterprises, the Royal Lady Hotel in Mgarr, and the Marsalforn Hotel. Out in the Maltese countryside on a hill was Selmun Palace dating back to the Knights; transformed into a hotel, this had 20 rooms and sought £7,702 to provide additional furniture and fittings.¹¹

A characteristic feature of all these existing Maltese-owned hotels, possibly excepting the Phoenicia, was the relatively very small number of guest rooms available. The Phoenicia Hotel had 120 rooms in 1963; the Imperial had 75. They were the largest. The Marsalforn Hotel and the Royal Lady had only 9 and 5 rooms respectively, with the former planning to construct additional ones, and the latter increasing its bathrooms. They hardly deserved to be recognised as hotels. Only the student complex in Bugibba mentioned beach facilities, while another, at Tigne', mentioned a swimming pool.

The very names of most of these hotels in the early Sixties told a story, usually a colonial one. The bars and coffee shops told even more stories, as some surviving ones still do ranging from "The Army and Navy" to "The Glory of England". In July 1963 the Malta Government Tourist Board said in a press release that in his budget speech in March the Prime Minister had announced "improved conditions of grant for hotel developers undertaking to construct first-class hotels with resort amenities". Grants or loans could go up to one-third of capital outlay. One of the first projects to benefit under the enhanced conditions was a 300-bed, 13-storey hotel being built in Tower Road, Sliema: the Preluna Hotel.¹² This sea-front hotel in a fashionable promenade became by far Malta's highest building.

¹¹ 'Aid to Existing Hotels', App. A, Med.123/8/010/C.D.W.(D) No. 7395, 926/2058.

¹² 'Malta Hotel Development - Enhanced Conditions of Grant', Valletta, 17 July 1963, enc. 926/2058.

DOMESTIC EXPORTS

SECTION II

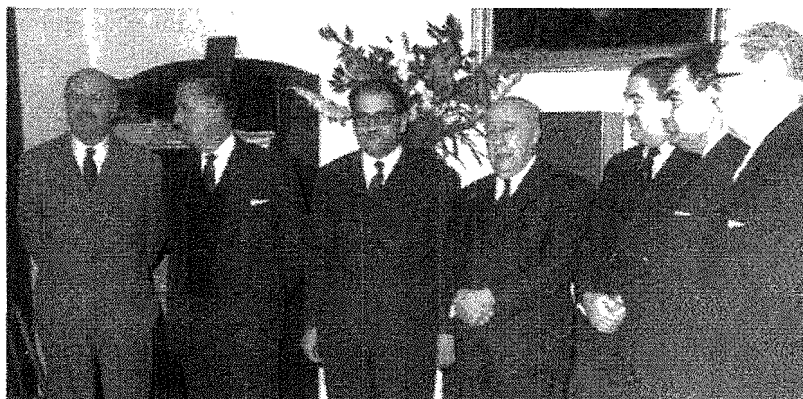
Table F.

£1000.

	1961	1962	1963	1964
FOODS:-				
Preserved fruit	37	19	16	14
Potatoes	304	372	487	247
Onions	14	71	32	56
Butter	6	24	9	10
TOTAL	461	477	564	327
BEVERAGES:-				
Wine	19	39	24	19
Beer	45	38	32	26
Wines	56	147	241	300
TOTAL	121	224	297	345
TOBACCO:-				
Cigarettes	128	56	76	117
CRUDE MATERIALS:-				
Wool, skins	60	41	53	35
Waxes, flowers and seed	87	183	207	195
Scrap wool	56	206	211	248
TOTAL	203	410	471	378
ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE OILS AND FATS:-				
	154	8	729	347
MANUFACTURES:-				
Textiles	7	26	31	54
Rubber manufactures	7	108	177	302
Motor cars	25	82	26	35
Travelling and luggage	30	289	009	1,429
Woolen stockings	38	56	77	8
Glasses, mirrors	128	97	117	19
Other stockings	21	30	50	175
Smoking pipes	19	27	24	28
Articles of plastic	2	17	34	54
Furniture and fixtures	-	13	31	69
Other manufactures	-	124	124	88
TOTAL	317	644	1,430	2,446
OTHER ITEMS:-				
	4	53	54	70
TOTAL DOMESTIC EXPORTS	1,332	2,503	3,080	4,251

Domestic exports between 1961 and 1964 were increasing, but not nearly enough to keep up with the increasing rate of imports. In 1963 Gross National Product per head rose to £152.7 and was the highest since 1954.

(Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1964.)



Felice with Maltese entrepreneurs, including (next to him) Mr Joseph Cassar of Marsovin, Chairman of the Federation of Industry.

A *tour d'horizon* of Malta's incipient tourist industry was given by John A. Mizzi in an article published in London in 1964. He described the opening of the Dragonara Palace Casino, an Anglo-German venture which had already cost £350,000 and would cost one million by the time its 400-bed hotel was completed. The contract between Hilton Hotels International and the Malta Government had been signed and the hotel would be operational by 1966. A cash grant equivalent to 50% of the capital outlay was given to Wyncorr Ltd. of Dallas, Texas, who were financing the project costing nearly one and a half million pounds, of which as much as £450,000 originated from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Other hotels opening in 1964 or soon thereafter were the Comino Hotel on the island of Comino, with a restaurant, chalets and villas. At least three British firms moving into hotel construction in Malta in the early Sixties were Hubbalit Developments Ltd. of London, with a holiday centre accomodating 600 guests; Shaw (High Storrs) Ltd. of Sheffield were building a 440-bed hotel opposite Comino; and Beauport Development Corporation of Jersey in the Channel Islands, who were erecting a 210-double bedroom hotel in Mellieha Bay, similarly to the north of the main island. Italian investors were also interested. A yacht marina was being developed at Ta' Xbiex. A catering school was now required to train much-needed staff, and the upkeep of beaches, which were in a bad state, had to be seen to. By 1966-67 no less than seven million pounds would have been invested in new hotels and 5,700 new beds would have become available. The Tourist Board hoped that by then an income of £4,400,000 annually would be derived from tourist spending.¹³

In addition to spinning and even heating up the economy in the course of the 1960s, the diversification drive through export-oriented factories and up-market hotels would revolutionize Maltese society. It was already starting to provide many different kinds of jobs, not least for young women; it also ushered in different *mores*, from the roulette to the bikini. It was an adventurous but perilous exercise, with grave

¹³ J.A. Mizzi, "Malta intensifies the tourist drive and builds new luxury hotels", *New Commonwealth*, Sept. 1964, enc. 926/2058.

Table C.1
ESTIMATED POPULATION CHANGES: 1954 - 1964

The Maltese Islands

Year	Population as at 30th June	Annual change	Percentage change
1954	319,787		
1955	314,369	- 5,418	- 1.69
1956	314,066	- 303	- 0.10
1957	318,779	+ 4,713	+ 1.50
1958	321,940	+ 3,161	+ 0.99
1959	324,842	+ 2,902	+ 0.90
1960	328,517	+ 3,675	+ 1.13
1961	328,854	+ 337	+ 0.10
1962	329,011	+ 157	+ 0.05
1963	328,116	- 895	- 0.27
1964	323,591	- 4,525	- 1.38

Table D.3

MARITAL CONDITION OF EMIGRANTS, AGED 15 AND OVER

	Single & Widowed %	Married %	All Conditions %
Emigrants to all countries	40.7	59.3	100.0
Of which to:-			
Australia	36.7	63.3	100.0
United Kingdom	57.2	42.8	100.0
Canada	36.8	63.2	100.0
U.S.A.	34.5	65.5	100.0

Table D.4

EMIGRANTS BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP, 1964

Socio-Economic Group	number	%
Higher administrative, professional & managerial occupations	67	0.97
Intermediate administrative, professional & managerial	119	1.33
Shopkeepers, shop assistants, clerical workers	332	3.69
Personal service occupations (non-sexual)	97	1.08
Personal service occupations (sexual)	218	2.43
Foremen, overlookers, supervisors	13	0.14
Skilled operatives	1,707	18.99
Semi-skilled workers	204	2.27
Unskilled workers	896	9.99
Farmers, agricultural workers	357	3.97
Of no gainful occupation	4,955	55.14
TOTAL	8,967	100.00

Emigration eased population growth. Net decreases, always below 2%, were highest in 1954, 1956 and 1964. Most of those going to the UK in 1964 were single, but of those going to Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. most were married. Most emigrants in 1964 had no gainful occupation, but a good percentage were skilled and qualified.

implications for urban, landscape and coastal planning. Diversification was open to the dangers of neocolonialism as foreign 'sharks' moved in, sometimes not delivering on the aid grants received. Much more frequently, these acquired land and property on the cheap and exploited it, upmarking prices to the disadvantage of native buyers whose earnings were disproportionate to those of newer clients from Britain and elsewhere. Soon these could not keep up with the housing market and pleaded for the provision of low-cost government housing. In manufacturing industry there was an over-reliance on textiles, which later necessitated further diversification. All told, however, this decade proved to be a take-off period for the Maltese economy, as Metwally, Briguglio, Spiteri and others have shown.¹⁴

The other project, on which Borg Olivier's administration was working hard, with British help, was emigration. It was absolutely necessary to tap new avenues, to increase if possible the existing country immigration quotas for Maltese islanders. This was not easy: either because quotas were strict and rigid, as were those of the U.S.A. after the McCurran-Walter Act; or because Britain for moral or racial reasons would not advise emigration by Maltese to certain countries, such as the Republic of South Africa (or, for different reasons, Latin America); or because Maltese unskilled workers, or indeed Maltese nationals, were not particularly needed or particularly desired. One such case was New Zealand, where Maoris were making their presence increasingly felt and Anglo-Saxons would have been much preferred to Maltese or other immigrants from southern Europe or the Mediterranean region.¹⁵

As it turned out, Borg Olivier was lucky to have in his Minister of Labour and Emigration, Dr Alexander Cachia Zammit, a good

¹⁴ M.M.Metwally, *Structure and Performance of the Maltese Economy* (Malta, 1977); L. Briguglio, *The Maltese Economy; A Macroeconomic Analysis* (Malta, 1988); and E.J.Spiteri, *op.cit.*

¹⁵ There were mixed views as to whether the prospect of Maltese emigration to South Africa, which had been brought up by Stolper, should be encouraged or not, especially if that country were offering to pay 50% of the fares. The Foreign Office

emissary. This doctor from one of the oldest-established Maltese political families seems to have exercised a charm on those whom he met in his inter-continental travels, albeit he was also trying to accomodate their needs - such as the provision of single women - as best he could. On impact, the host country's tone changed. In one country after another which the Minister visited, what had previously been dismissed as difficult, unlikely or impossible, turned out after all to be possible, feasible and imminent. The change of mood was remarkable, not only in Australia, where after Cachia Zammit's meetings there the quota which had been raised to 3,000 was now raised from 3,000 to over 4,000 annually (and later raised again). "With his many personal qualities", the Australian Minister for Immigration wrote to the Secretary of State, "it was natural that Dr Cachia-Zammit's visit to Australia should prove most valuable to the cause of Maltese migration to this country. My colleagues and I were delighted to have him as our guest."¹⁶

In New Zealand, a quota for 100 single men aged between 20 and 35 which in 1954 had seemed excessive, was put up to 250. Would-be Maltese migrants there tended to be seen negatively, placed in the same category as Greeks and Yugoslavs, who were said to have

adopted "a thoroughly moral attitude in this matter" Fairclough minuted to Kisch and Eastwood, 16 May 1963. In Malta, Wakefield was very much against it, minuted Eastwood on 24 May, adding "and (having seen the Maltese en masse) so am I. They will certainly face embarrassment. I hope that the idea can be dropped." Different views however were also expressed in the same correspondence between March and May 1964, 926/1957/48655.

¹⁶ Downer/Sandys, 17 Sept. 1963, CO926/1953/48655. The long history of Maltese emigration to and settlement in Australia is a well-tested research ground and has occupied the attention of a number of authors, more recently including sociologists and socio-linguists. For a comprehensive historical account see B. York, *Race and Empire* (Sydney, 1990), as well as the 'Malta' entries in J. Jupp (Ed): *The Australian People* (Canberra, 1988). For a general historical overview of Maltese emigration see Lawrence Attard's three volume work, but see also an unpublished Canadian M.A. thesis by John Crawford, available in the Melitensia Section of the University of Malta Library. A short general history is provided by L. Attard's chapter on Maltese emigration in H. Frendo and O. Friggieri (eds), *Malta: Culture and Identity* (Ministry for the Arts, Valletta, 1994), pp. 253-269.

SECTION D

EMIGRATION MOVEMENT: 1950/64

Table 1.

Maltese Islands.

Year	Commonwealth					Non-Commonwealth			Grand
	United Kingdom	Australia	Canada	Other	Total	U.S.A.	Other	Total	Total
Emigrants									
1950	1,038	5,563	863	8	7,472	1,022	9	1,031	8,503
1951	1,234	4,006	1,607	9	6,856	831	5	836	7,692
1952	1,200	2,161	660	1	4,042	1,293	10	1,303	5,345
1953	1,702	1,376	770	1	3,849	683	-	683	4,532
1954	1,690	8,470	963	24	11,147	299	1	300	11,447
1955	1,872	6,442	428	2	8,744	266	-	266	9,007
1956	1,161	2,724	383	4	4,272	217	3	220	4,492
1957	960	1,206	739	8	2,993	292	-	292	3,285
1958	805	1,643	505	3	2,956	196	-	196	3,152
1959	744	1,875	472	-	3,091	174	-	174	3,265
1960	878	2,304	509	4	3,695	142	4	146	3,841
1961	1,112	2,140	213	3	3,468	108	4	112	3,580
1962	1,129	2,051	371	13	3,564	76	1	77	3,641
1963	1,332	4,152	905	3	6,392	92	95	187	6,579
1964	1,597	5,923	1,181	30	8,731	87	169	256	8,987
TOTAL	18,454	52,116	10,586	113	81,269	5,778	301	6,079	87,348

These figures giving Maltese emigration trends between 1950 and 1964 show that nearly 90,000 Maltese emigrated during those fifteen years, with emigration picking up again in 1963. During the same period some 9,000 emigrants returned, by far the largest number coming back in 1957 during the first Mintoff administration.

difficulty integrating. In response to a typical Commonwealth Relations Office endeavour in this regard dated 4th March 1963, the British High Commissioner Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce (whose brother was stationed in Malta) saw New Zealand's Minister of Immigration, Tom Shand. The New Zealand outlook towards Europeans from the Mediterranean "is quite unreasonable", Cumming-Bruce replied from Wellington,

and the prejudice has its roots deep in public opinion. Consequently the authorities have a very reserved approach to immigration from the Mediterranean area. They were not sorry when, on the last occasion that a small quota was fixed eight years ago for Maltese entry, only half a dozen or so families eventually took advantage of it.

The 'Kiwi' Minister emphasised that the Government was not keen on immigration of people from Southern Europe as they tended to fall into the bottom tier both socially and for labour purposes, which was being rapidly swollen by the massive increase of Maori population. This was being aggravated by immigration from the Cook Islands and Samoa which were anxious to increase their migration; as the years passed the pressure from the Islands would be increasingly difficult to resist: and this would further weight the population against the Anglo-Saxons. This "Polynesian problem" made the prospect of migration in New Zealand "totally different from that in Australia, and he (Shand) was not prepared to accept that there was any justifiable basis of comparison in relation to Maltese."¹⁷ In a meeting with Sandys in London in June 1963, Cumming-Bruce commented privately that "the people in New Zealand have a rather narrow and selfish outlook" and he had "little hope that they would prove able to help over Malta's

¹⁷ Cumming-Bruce/Sandys, conf., 24 May 1963, CO926/1955/48655.

¹⁸ T. J. Lennard (C.R.O.)/A.J. Fairclough (C.O.), 18 June 1963. CO926/1955/48655. The C.R.O. was also asked "to find out for the information of the New Zealand authorities about a proposed visit to Australia and New Zealand this year by Mr. Cachia Zammit from Malta."

immigration.”¹⁸ Less than four months later Sandys (whose mother was born in New Zealand, his father having emigrated there) sent a personal note to Cumming-Bruce which read as follows:

Dear Francis,

I was pleased to learn that Dr Cachia Zammit, the Maltese Minister of Labour and Emigration, made such a good impression during his visit to New Zealand.

I am very glad that the New Zealanders have decided to admit initially 250 Maltese immigrants this year. This is most helpful and I would be grateful if you would convey my thanks to New Zealand Ministers.

Best Wishes.

Yours ever,

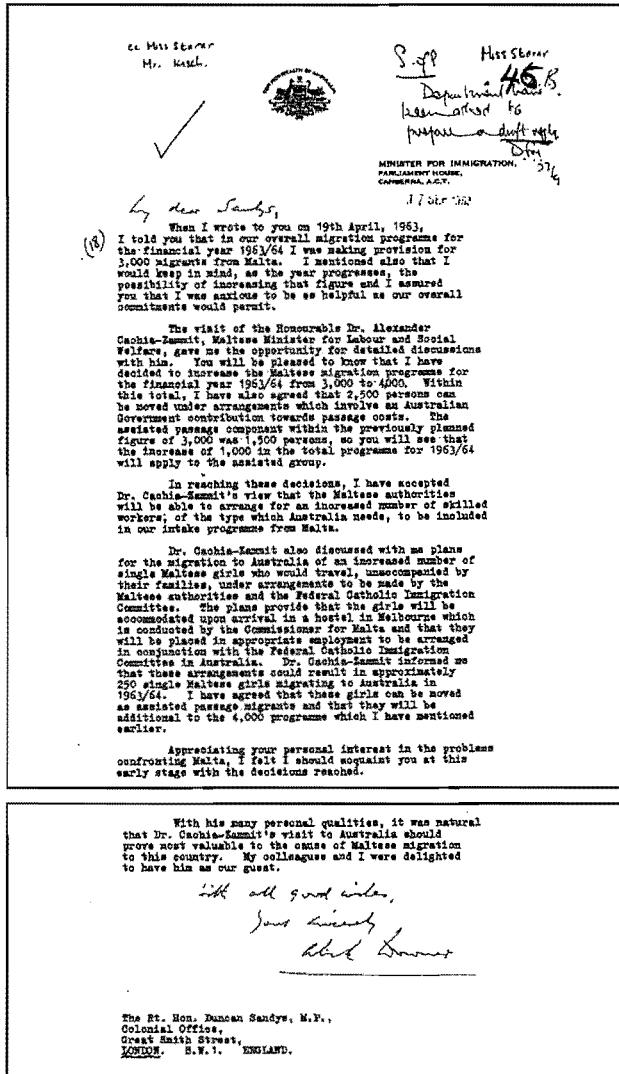
Duncan.¹⁹

North America was more difficult, especially the U.S.A., with an annual quota for Maltese of still only 100, but some headway was made there too. Between 1962 and 1963 the number of Maltese taken by Canada trebled to nearly one thousand.²⁰ According to a survey report by the University of Windsor, Maltese families were settling and mixing rather well there, mostly in Toronto and the metropolitan area of Ontario: 60% of migrants in the early sixties found employment within one week of arrival, and 75% changed their jobs more than once.²¹ Following Cachia Zammit's visit to Canada in September 1963, and approaches made by the British High Commission in Ottawa, educational and other criteria were relaxed, while possibilities of family sponsorship of prospective migrants - what is known in migration studies as 'chain migration'

¹⁹ Sandys/Cumming-Bruce, 4 Oct. 1963, CO926/1955/48655.

²⁰ Eastwood min., 'Emigration from Malta to Canada', 17 June 1964, CO926/1956/48655. The figures given were 371 for 1962 and 905 for 1963.

²¹ For a synopsis of this report, presented to Cachia Zammit by George Bonavia of Windsor, Ontario, see "Maltese Immigrants to Canada: Survey Report by University of Windsor", *The Bulletin*, 31 Mar. 1964, enc. CO926/1956/48655.



Australia was responsive to Malta's emigration drive, as may be seen from this letter of Minister Downer to the Secretary of State, which also spoke highly of Dr Caccia Zammit.

- would increase with the growing number of Maltese-Canadian settlers. In addition, up to 300 Maltese workers and their families could be nominated annually by the Canadian Government "for open placement." "The Canadians", noted Christopher Eastwood in June 1964 basing himself also on meetings held with Mr Pickersgill and Mr Isbister from the Canadian Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, "are clearly willing to do all they can within practicable limits to encourage Maltese immigrants, and selection teams will be visiting Malta at least twice this year and expect to increase the number of acceptances still further."²²

Prospects also opened up in Germany (where as many as 2,000 apparently could get jobs); in Belgium; and, through the Admiralty, in Gibraltar (where there was a large Maltese-descended presence).²³ The main problem in Gibraltar was space, especially housing, but Maltese migration there was also seen as possibly having the merit of rendering labour on the Rock less dependent on border-crossers from Spain. The Admiralty took the initiative to follow this up even before Lord Lansdowne, the Minister of State for the Colonies, had written about it to Lord Carrington.²⁴

²² Eastwood min., 17 June 1964, 'Emigration from Malta to Canada', CO926/1956/48655.

²³ Extract Minute from a meeting in Valletta on 4 June 1963, i.e. during Sandys' visit, at which Christopher Eastwood from the C.O.'s Mediterranean desk was also present, CO926/195748655.

²⁴ See i.a. Med 114/8/02, conf., 10 June 1963, to J.E.Gale at the War Office; Dudley Ward/Eastwood, 6 June 1963, wherein the Governor and Commander-in-Chief at Gibraltar, General Sir Dudley Ward, says he had discussed the prospect with the Chief Member of Gibraltar's Executive Council (Sir Joshua Hassan); and the discussions held by the Gibraltar Department of Labour and Social Security with the CYBARCO company who were ready to recruit and train Maltese; they also asked if reduced migrant fares could be offered by B.E.A. to Maltese travelling to Gib. E.Howard Davis/T.M. Jenkins, 2 Jan. 1964. See also min. Eastwood/Lansdowne, 10 May 1963, Foggon/Fairclough, 16 May 1963, and internal correspondence thereon. A good deal of Government-sponsored construction was then under way in Gibraltar.

As for emigration to the UK, the British Government took this matter firmly in hand from 1962 onwards, so much so that a representative from the Ministry of Labour was attached to the UK side of the Joint Study. This was Miss Grainger, that department's Assistant Secretary, who was regarded as "exceedingly competent". It was planned to have three categories of Maltese migrants for the UK: those who would already have employment to go to there; those with special skills; and those still seeking employment. A 'Barbados-type' scheme was suggested whereby people would get booked up for jobs in England before they left Malta so that they would come in under the first category.²⁵ A grade 1 officer from the Rome embassy K. J. Hird, who had served as Labour Attache' in Lebanon, was indicated as another possible assistant.²⁶ The UK was only running second to Australia as a host country for Maltese migrants, with 1,129 going there in 1962 and 1,332 in 1963.²⁷

The organisation of mass emigration also meant money, however. For Borg Olivier's administration, it was a budgetary concern. His position was that emigration would indeed be promoted to wherever, funds permitting. In a memorandum transmitted by Wakefield, Stolper proposed a reallocation to emigration of some of the British aid to Malta. This provoked quite a discussion in London as to how and how much could Britain assist financially. It was suggested that the offer of £100, 000 made by Sandys and roundly dismissed by Borg Olivier in August 1962 be somehow revived. Now described in C.O. jargon as the 'silver collection' offer, which is what Borg Olivier had called it, it was feared that having thus turned it down he could not now accept it without loss of face, if it were to be offered again in connection with emigration expenses.

²⁵ Eastwood/Wakefield, 5 Nov. 1962, CO926/1183/48583.

²⁶ Rossetti/Martin, 24 Aug. 1962, CO926/1183/48583.

²⁷ Min., Jenkins/Huijsman, 14 Feb. 1964, 926/1951.

Cachia Zammit had suggested that if the £100, 000 could be made available, it should be provided in the form of an additional UK contribution to I.C.E.M., the Geneva-based Inter-Continental Committee for European Migration. He thought it might be a more face-saving way for Dr Borg Olivier than an outright grant from the UK to Malta. Another reason for this recommendation was that he hoped that, through I.C.E.M., it would also attract American money. The Americans might be persuaded to put up a contribution, which would be specifically earmarked for Malta.²⁸ Given the rising unemployment in Malta - from 3,772 in 1960 to 4,367 in 1961 to about 7,000 in 1962, and the impending Dockyard discharges, talks started in earnest on this prospect in which employment officials as well as I.C.E.M. were involved. At the Malta end their main counterparts, apart from the Minister, were the Director of Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare, J. M. Rossignaud, and the Assistant Director, J. Lungaro Mifsud. A lunch hosted by a visiting delegation in April 1963 was also attended, however, by the Australian Migration Officer, C. Hendy, and the Director of the Emigrants' Commission of Catholic Action; the Rev. Philip Calleja.²⁹

Contacts with I.C.E.M. were conducted mainly through the UK Mission in Geneva, while those with the Americans were being seen to by the I.C.E.M. Secretariat. In the end, the Treasury did not object to a total amount of £200,000 being paid to I.C.E.M. in the hope that it would attract an American contribution. In other words, the Maltese Government would still obtain much of that worth in assistance through Her Majesty's Government via I.C.E.M.'s

²⁸ A. N. Galsworthy/Fairclough min., 12 Mar. 1963, on his discussion with Cachia Zammit during one of his visits to Malta in February 1963, 926/1951.

²⁹ 'Report on Mr Maselli's and Mr Emerton's Visit to Malta (2-3 April 1963)', enc. 926/2064. It was noted in the report that whereas unemployment was rising, emigration was not. The figures given for 1959-1961 were 3,265, 3,841 and 3,580 respectively. Moreover, emigration was "well below the natural population growth, which averages 5,845 persons per year."

operational budget. Britain had also just increased her subscription to the programme of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.³⁰ The Americans were being pressed on this too and effectively accused of stinginess. By June 1963, finally, the Americans responded. A cable arrived from Washington on 24th June saying that the U.S. Government was prepared "to contribute £10 per capita for all Maltese migrants to Australia from the 1st July, 1963 to the 31st December, 1963, if the United Kingdom Government contributes at least £20 per capita." J. D. Miller in Geneva promptly phoned up Rossignaud in Valletta to break the news. Not much, but it was "the very best we can expect", he told him.³¹

Without these various *démarches*, ably assisted and canvassed throughout by the Commonwealth Relations Office in London,³² it would not have been possible for so many Maltese to be accepted as migrants in 1963, 1964 and 1965. Ironically but understandably, Malta's year of Independence would show one of the highest rates of emigration ever recorded. The statistics speak for themselves, showing that the highest marginal net decreases in population, notwithstanding the continuing natural increases, occurred in the mid-1950s and then again in the mid-1960s. Malta's emigration peaks were 1954 (11,147), 1955 (8,741) and 1964 (8,731). Of these total numbers, most went to Australia (8,470 in 1954, 6,442 in 1955 and 5,923 in 1964 respectively), followed by the UK (1,690, 1,872 and 1,597 respectively), and Canada (963, 425 and 1,181 respectively).³³ Emigration in 1963 and in 1965 was also very much on the high side, with 6,579 leaving in the former year and

³⁰ See the explanation from the UK Mission in Geneva dated 8 June 1963 to G. T. P. Marshall in the United Nations Department at the Foreign Office, 926/2064.

³¹ Miller/Marshall, 24 June 1963, 926/2064.

³² On this see for example the exchanges between Eastwood, Kisch and Fairclough, among others, during February 1963, 926/1953/48655.

³³ See the comparative breakdowns given above in the table 'Emigration Movement: 1950-1964'.

as many as 8,090 in the latter, on much the same host country pattern.³⁴

It should also be mentioned however that in 1964 there were 495 returned emigrants, of whom 263 repatriated from Australia, 160 from the UK, and 319 from other countries, those countries not being Canada or the U.S.A. Hardly anyone went back from there.³⁵ In the following year - 1965 - 530 returned, the highest number since 1958.³⁶ The 1964 figure of nearly 9,000 emigrants would never again be matched, let alone surpassed. In the course of the decade emigration dropped and returnees increased; but who was to know that in 1964?

Jobs don't wait. Dole queues are painful. Beyond, another future beckoned; the grass looked greener on the other side, and so it may well have been indeed for countless Maltese who made a new home and a new future seeking greater opportunity, security and often better living standards. And yet, with the advantage of hindsight, it is pertinent to ask if there was not a panic 'save your skin' reaction in 1963-1964 - the Maltese saying is '*dabbar rasek*'. To wonder, that is, whether this rush to the life-boats would have been induced not simply by the actual discharges, given or impending, but by the very uncertainty hanging over Independence itself: the fear that so small, so dependent, so colonized a place as Malta just could not go it alone, just could not make it. The dark night, the rough seas, and all that.

³⁴ *Annual Abstract of Statistics 1965*, Central Office of Statistics, n. 19, Dept of Information, Valletta, 1966, pp. 10-11.

³⁵ 'Statement showing number of Returned Emigrants by Country and Sex: 1964', Table 10, Section D, p. 30, *Annual Abstract of Statistics 1964*, n. 18, Central Office of Statistics, Dept of Information, Valletta, 1965.

³⁶ *Annual Abstract of Statistics 1965*, n. 19, Central Office of Statistics, Dept of Information, Valletta, 1966, p.10.

As may be gauged from a bird's eye view of Malta in the mid-sixties through the data, the Island was struggling but still surviving.³⁷ In spite of an evidently huge import-export imbalance and the pressing infrastructural needs for which so much capital investment was required, between 1959 and 1964 the Gross National Product at constant prices slightly increased by over one million pounds to £42,000,000, while the GNP *per capita* of the Maltese population increased by £6 to £141.2. There would have been some inflation but, on current account, the balance of payments held.³⁸

Economic diversification was an enormous challenge. Malta was forced to jump in at the deep end. But, perhaps surprisingly, she pulled through, drawing on her own resources and on a will to succeed. The past had taught Maltese how to survive, somehow or other, as it had done in much the same way to other island communities which had been island outposts and fortress colonies, even slave plantations, from the Caribbean to South East Asia. They survived too and made their own way in the world.

Malta was not one of the first colonies to become independent. At least two other once strategically important colonial possessions, Cyprus and Singapore, took their leave of Britain before Malta did, the latter more stridently and decisively than the former, albeit a little later. Malta, with its European heritage, was one of the first British non-settled possessions to presume or to demand a large measure of independence, between 1802 and 1932, well before the final fling of decolonization lasting from the late 1950s to the mid-sixties. It was also one of the first to get *representative* and later *responsible* government and to keep and *regain* this for stretches of time; but it was one of the very last of the 'outposts of empire' to be set free.

A comparative study of how outposts of empire fared in the disengagement-decolonization process, in and beyond the

³⁷ *Annual Abstract of Statistics* 1965, n. 19, Dept of Information, Valletta, 1966, ii.

³⁸ See E. J. Spiteri, *Island in Transition*, *op.cit.*, p. 75, p. 121.

ANNEX TO CHAPTER V

EXPLANATION OF ASSUMPTIONS FOR PROJECTIONS OF THE MALTESE ECONOMY

A. Notes for table 50: Prospects for the Maltese economyPopulation

1. Assumption (a): The birth-rate and death-rate are assumed to remain at the annual average level of 1959-1961 for each age and sex. Emigration is assumed to be as follows: 1963 as in 1959-1961, net of 10 per cent returnees; 1964-1966, 10,000 per annum, net of 10 per cent returnees; and 1967 and thereafter, 3,000 per annum, net of 10 per cent returnees.

2. Assumption (b): The birth-rate and death-rate are assumed to be the same as in 1961. Emigration is assumed to be as follows: 5,000 in 1963; 7,500 in 1964; and 10,000 per annum during the period 1965-1969. The rate of return migration is assumed to be 5 per cent. Diminution of United Kingdom servicemen's families is assumed to be two-thirds, spread evenly over the period 1962-1969.

Labour force

3. The population assumptions are as given before. The labour force will be made up of persons aged fourteen to sixty-three years, assuming that they will be subject to the same activity rates as those revealed in the 1957 census. The Principal Government Statistician projected the population aged fifteen to fifty-nine years and advised that this figure should be raised 105-106 per cent to arrive at a labour force aged fourteen to sixty-three years. The Mission has raised the figures by 105.5 per cent.

Consumption

4. It is assumed arbitrarily that the average consumption of 1961 will continue to be maintained. The population assumptions are as given above. In 1961 the consumption per capita was estimated at £108.79 before taxes. Consumer expenditure refers to the Maltese population only. Purchases by servicemen's families are considered re-exports.

General government consumption

5. Normal growth - (a): This is as implied in the increase in the ordinary

Some of the assumptions and projections summarized in the Stolper report.



Dr Stolper (centre) being seen off at the airport by Dr Ragonesi and colleagues in 1964.

Mediterranean region, would reveal various interesting points of comparison, political and economic, to which the very visits to Malta by Lee Kwan Yew and later Makarios could point. There were notable points of difference with both Cyprus and Singapore, in that Malta, although prone to be litigious and fanatical, was incomparably more homogeneous than either one or the other. It had also enjoyed a longer span of internal autonomy, however interrupted and disrupted, generally however with a free press and a secret ballot, for generations.³⁹

³⁹ For passing comparisons with other parts of the British Empire see above, I, 5, and *passim*.

With some exceptions, until the late 1950s and early 1960s Maltese nationalism had been more culturally than economically inspired. Malta had no oil like Nigeria, no rubber like Malaya, no yarn like India; her native cotton and tobacco crops were largely destroyed by the mid-19th century, partly due to new colonial-linked pressures on the labour market coupled with a demographic displacement, partly as a result of increasing competition from such countries as Egypt and the U.S.A. Malta had good harbours for use by ships crossing the Mediterranean in any direction; she had docks, wharves and warehouses, and later airfields. To a large extent, the ruler became the employer. As Braudel would say, "he who gives, dominates"; although there was no less giving than taking. Malta however also had a Latin soul, a long, colourful and 'multi-cultural' history totally disproportionate to her actual size. There were transmitted memories of valour bearing on values; survival against the odds; a peculiar mix of language, literature and religion; a well-versed, cosmopolitan bourgeoisie; an open air gregariousness caressed by a blue sea and a warm sun making for a strong native in-group feeling. Insular and insulated, this had been transformed into a national identity in relation to a usually influential but always different "other": the foreign overlord - and the world outside (*barra minn Malta, barra minn hawn*). Diversification meant greater dealings with more foreigners of all kinds to do business, more or less *sur le pied de l'égalité*.

Even among the comparatively well catered for dockyard work-force when the times were good, there was bitter resentment at the higher pay for equal work performed by British nationals who were expatriates; but this was regarded as racial discrimination; upper ranks there, as in the Royal Navy, were or seemed beyond the reach of Maltese on grounds of nationality. These resentments could flare up when the going became rough, particularly as until the early Sixties the Cottonera dockyard district had the only urban-proletarian concentration existing in the Maltese Islands. Mintoff, the Oxford-educated son of a Royal Navy cook and a pawn-broking mother, belonged here as in a nest: it was his home ground as well as his main electoral district and constituency. Speaking the language of class and place, for half-a-century he had sufficient

organizational and charismatic grip to make it seem like a personal fief. The dockyard was livelihood. Borg Olivier's party by contrast had always been more of a Valletta-based caucus, replete with lawyer-politicians, using the informal networks of court and cloister, town and gown, sack and cloth, farm and stead, together with an array of village notables, often including the parish priests. They tended to see themselves as the natural party of government, Mintoff as an upstart and trouble-shooter. They in turn were depicted as a privileged class, aloof from the workers and toiling masses in their predilection for linguistic niceties, legal and constitutional norms. These versions were of course stereotypes: the reality was far more complex: but publicized perceptions were also indicative of ongoing tendencies. In the meantime, society changed as did technology, at an increasingly faster pace, and especially so in the nineteen sixties.

On the whole, in spite of the inevitable tensions and disagreements, Malta's path to statehood as it turned out, and evolved, was a more politically democratic and peaceful one than that being experienced by most other colonies and ex-colonies around the globe, be they British, French, Italian or Portugese. This stability helped economic diversification by facilitating investment, enterprise and industry. It may have been in part a constraint of space and size; ethnic homogeneity, as well as of an intimidating military presence all-round. Many Maltese had a religiously-influenced passively conformist aptitude, with mass emigration acting as a safety valve particularly in the decade 1954-1964. Economic progress must also have had something to do with the persevering yet relatively easy-going administration led by Borg Olivier. Together with his colleagues and advisers, he was as unrelenting as he could afford to be but generally bent on defusing rather than inciting strife. He had faith. He accepted advice. He got aid. Thus adopting a posture at one time astute and calculating, calm and tenacious, he showed himself cautiously responsive to circumstantial needs, to the limitations and the possibilities - in an unfolding situation which was no less trying socially and economically, than it was politically and constitutionally.

Time would tell if the colonized, in seeking emancipation, wanted to take the colonizer's place and be like him, or not. If the faces were

painted or hidden behind masks, with a rhetoric that did not match the reality. If new bursts of energy and inspiration, education and training, organization and planning, production, management and outreach would be released combined with changed insights and approaches towards self, Europe and the world. If bureaucracy, officialdom and functionality would subdue meritocracy, initiative and enterprise, vying with political power for control over minds and status. If the servile, scrounging, accomodating, top-down mentality to which so many people had grown conveniently accustomed, would persist. If the wealth created would spread and opportunities flourish, or not.

That, however, is not the story of how a onetime fortress colony succeeded in staving off a potential socio-economic disaster, becoming independent, sovereign and viable in a fast changing world, but one about the extent to which it truly could, or did, realize such independence after the appointed day. In strict economic and survivalist terms, the rapid growth of tourism, industry and other services would prove the soothsayers wrong, with emigration declining to a trickle by the late 1960s.

The Mintoff Factor

A COUP D'ÉTAT IN THE OFFING?

Mintoff's Labour Party exclaimed to the high heavens that the May 1964 referendum had been inconclusive. More stridently than ever they demanded that fresh elections should be held, after their religious human rights provisions would have been brought into effect directly by Order-in-Council from London. Their earlier appeals to the UN's Committee of 24 (which dealt mainly with decolonization questions) were published in an MLP pamphlet. In the foreword to this, Mintoff denounced "the crooked referendum" and listed four considerations which, he held, militated against the British government's desire "to hand over Malta to the politically-minded clergy", inveighing against "the arrogance of the puppet Prime Minister in refusing facilities to United Nations investigators..." Among his four considerations, Mintoff included public opinion in Britain, as expressed in the national (British) press; and "the opposition of the British Labour Party" (to the draft Constitution). "Whether the British Conservative Government, now standing on its last legs, would fly in the face of all these obstacles

in order to keep its base in Malta", he wrote, "will be decided in the next few weeks."¹

In an appendix, the MLP pamphlet also included the text of a letter of protest which Borg Olivier had sent to the UN Committee of 24 on 29th April 1964, just before the referendum was held. Borg Olivier stressed that the MLP had only 16 out of the 50 seats in Parliament and were "solely a political minority" as in Malta "there are no racial, religious, ethnical or other minorities." In granting independence to Malta, the British government would "endeavour to be guided by the wishes of the People of Malta as expressed through their vote in the Referendum." On the eve of Malta's independence and her membership of the UN, "the United Nations should expect that the views of its legally constituted Government should be upheld..." He also mentioned the smaller parties controlling eight seats in the legislature who did not support the MLP's "so called 'Human Rights' provisions in the Malta Constitution."²

Concurrently, other very important issues were being discussed in great detail within the Ministry of Defence, and also increasingly with the Maltese government. Similar discussions were under way in the Treasury with regard to future financial assistance arrangements (from which the fate of the money-losing dockyard could not be extricated). Borg Olivier preferred these two aspects to be treated separately, not made to depend one on the other. In real life, however, the two were seen to be related and to some extent mutually dependent, not only because the extent of financial assistance needed depended in part on the extent of Defence reductions.

Considerations in the related areas of defence and security stood on this tripod: actual British defence needs; the changing

¹ See *United Nations Debate Independence for Malta*, Freedom Press, Marsa, 28 May 1964; pp. 7-8.

² *Ibid.*, 65-66.

Mediterranean situation; and uncertainty as to Malta's political future.

First of all, there were Britain's actual needs, in terms of air space, communications and Malta as 'a forward base'. Skinned of the heftier navy and army operations, defence strategists sought to determine what cut closest to the bone. What remained of Malta's use to Britain and, to a lesser extent, her NATO partners? This was a primary consideration, worked out time and again, with tables and counter-tables of logistics, placements, deployments, relativities and costs.

There was a second consideration, which ironically became more pressing as the date of Malta's independence approached. This related to the changing - for Britain, unfavourably - of the strategic and military position in the Mediterranean. Apart from Gibraltar and Malta, Britain also had a military presence and a strategic interest in Libya and in Cyprus. By 1956 Egypt had well and truly gone. In both Libya and Cyprus, the situation was deteriorating during the Malta Independence negotiations. Britain's access to defence and operational facilities in both these countries was becoming more uncertain. Contingency plans were laboriously being drawn up to assess and re-assess how Malta might after all still be needed, not simply as a forward base but for the stationing of troops and military hardware transferred from other bases where Britain's presence would have declined or ceased due to difficulties arising there.

The tripod's third leg was Mintoff. As already noted, Mintoff had lost much of the aura he had enjoyed during the Integration era in the mid-fifties. Sympathy for his position emanated mainly from the widespread perception that he and his party were being demonized and held hostage by devious and reactionary priests of the Roman Church and one prince archbishop. Foaming at the mouth like dinosaurs from a mediaeval inquisitorial age, these held poor little Dom in between their rows of big sharp teeth as he with bare fists kept the jaws from closing and swallowing him, damned as he already was. Rather more seriously, his fidgeting with powers unfriendly to Britain and to the West was understandably suspect,

and indeed resented. Intelligence reports about contacts Mintoﬀ and other members of his party were beginning to have after 1961, which intensified as the years wore on, were sometimes seen as alarming. Intelligence about internal goings-on within his own party and in rapport with other powers - taken together with some of his wild talk in meetings and editorials about 'civil war', 'arming the people' and suchlike - could hardly be taken lightly. Even if there may have been an element of bluff in it all, who was to know where the bluff began and where it ended. Briefly, Mintoﬀ had come to be seen as a security risk. Nor was the British Labour Party as unreserved in its regard for him and his party as he may have wished to think or to imply, as events unfolding in the coming months would show.

British concerns about security in Malta after Independence did not relate solely to defence and strategy in a narrow sense. As has already been suggested, they were also concerned with internal security, and that not just to safeguard directly Britain's own installations. At the same time that the British were becoming worried by the prospect of a destabilising unrest arising from growing unemployment, they were increasingly concerned about Mintoﬀ. Industrial unrest combined with political unrest could be lethal. Mintoﬀ was an unsurpassed master of the podium, a political Plautus who could turn such a situation to his party's advantage in a big way.

The spectre of a Mintoﬀ-engineered *coup d'état* in Malta shortly after Independence, possibly in league with other powers such as Nasser's Egypt, was repeatedly raised. It was a fear which several thoughtful Maltese also shared, although Borg Olivier himself seems not to have lost any sleep over it. In British circles, this fear was fuelled by reports from different quarters as to what Mintoﬀ's party were saying or doing, locally and overseas, and the company they kept. Defence considerations and contingency planning in relation to securing the base and maintaining public order must be read together with the proceedings of the Consultative Council in Malta, which met a number of times between 1962 and 1964 as provided for by the Blood Constitution of 1961, under the chairmanship of Governor Dorman.

Dorman himself was much preoccupied with security, including this *coup d'état* prospect. "There is one new item which is now causing many people grave concern - internal security, security in face of violence, civil commotion, or an attempt to overthrow the constituted government by coup or by force", the Governor told the assembled parish priests on 4th February 1964. "It is sad", Dorman added, "that in such a small Island, where all are brothers, such issues should have to be faced", but experience, particularly recent experience elsewhere, showed that nothing could be taken for granted:

Our whole future, investment in industry, work in the Yard, and visitors in hotels, depends upon internal stability - political, industrial and financial. This is an occasion when it is my duty to warn. The Government is reviewing all arrangements for maintaining law and order in face of any threat. Both before or after Independence it will maintain the closest cooperation with Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Having said this, I devoutly hope, and enjoin upon you, Reverend Gentlemen, to pray, and all to conduct themselves, so the plans made shall never be put into force. Let us have no more rattling of this sword in its scabbard; let it rest there and ultimately rust there.³

A few months later *L-Orizzont* splashed a story across its front page announcing that preparations were being made for a state of emergency in Malta. These included hospital logistics especially with regard to better-coordinated and faster treatment of cases in the casualty section, and the calling of medical doctors and of St Luke's Hospital personnel on special action duty. The transfer of patients from the Central Hospital in Floriana (next door to Police Headquarters) to St Luke's Hospital in Guardamangia had been undertaken so that the Central Hospital's halls could be turned into police dormitories, thus to make space for (evidently a full round-

³ "Governor on Malta's Future - The Opportunities and the Risks", *Times of Malta*, 5 Feb. 1964, pp. 4-5, 11.

the-clock) police complement required on duty at Police Headquarters in an emergency. In referring to Dorman's warning, the report mentioned the importation of arms by the police, the holding of intensive riot drills and other precautions being undertaken in consultation with the armed forces.⁴

In a top secret precautionary measure known only to security chiefs and Cabinet, Dr Borg Olivier and some of his Ministers were taken down to the underground operations room at Targa Gap and briefed on how, in the event of trouble, this could be used as a temporary headquarters for the Malta Government.⁵ The presumption was, obviously, that Targa Gap could serve such a purpose until control were re-established over Valletta, which had been Malta's administrative capital since the 16th century. The underground operations room at Targa Gap was fully equipped with communication facilities. While serving as a bunker for the administration it could still be operationally effective, not just a hide-out. Intelligence reports that the MLP could rely on outside military help, together with 55 armed partisans of its own, must certainly have been behind such an on-the-spot inspection of the underground Targa Gap premises by the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet.⁶

⁴ "Preparamenti għal xi Stat ta' Emergenza f'Malta", *L-orizzont*, 17 June 1964, p.1. A 'Government Statment' issued by the Dept. of Information, n. 192, Sat., 27 June 1964, held that these measures had long been established to meet disasters and had "no connection with any fictitious state of emergency". Enc., NAM, Internal Security, ser. 4/64, sec.

⁵ Information confided to the author in San Pawl tat-Targa, Malta, on 15th July 1999, by one who was present, and who preferred to remain anonymous. Asked to recall when exactly this inspection of Targa Gap had taken place he said it was "some time before Independence" (*f'it qabel l-Indipendenza*). The initiative did not come from the Cabinet: they had been advised by those in charge of security to undertake the inspection and be briefed accordingly as a precaution ("Kienu qalulna..."). See below esp., pp. 490-491.

⁶ For more Intelligence details bearing on this grave possibility and other disquieting reports, see below, II, 15, and III, 17.



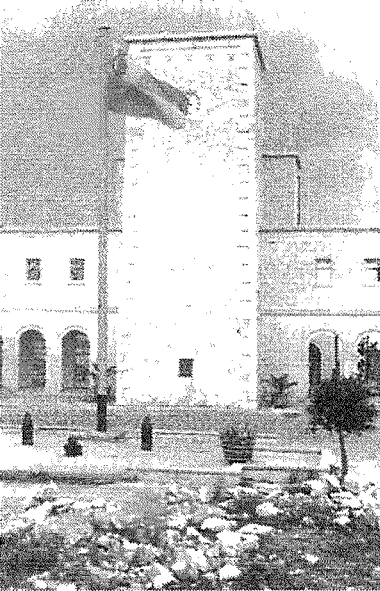
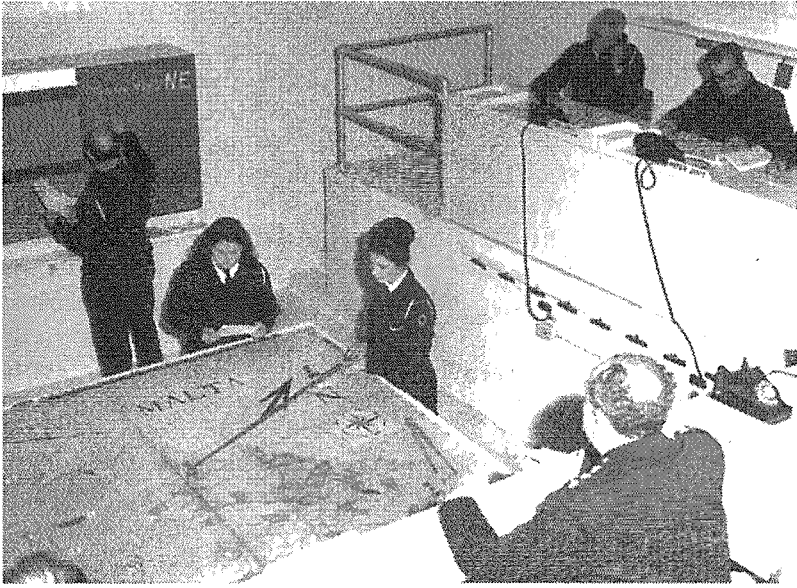
Colonel J. Abela, Commandant of the Malta Civil Defence Corps, presents the coat-of-arms of the corps to the Prime Minister. His Adjutant, Mr E. Tonna, is on the left. Below: after Independence, the Prime Minister inspects a Maltese regiment.



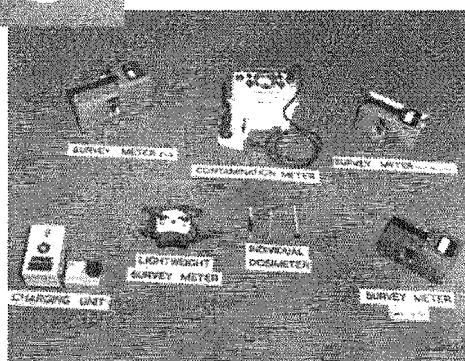
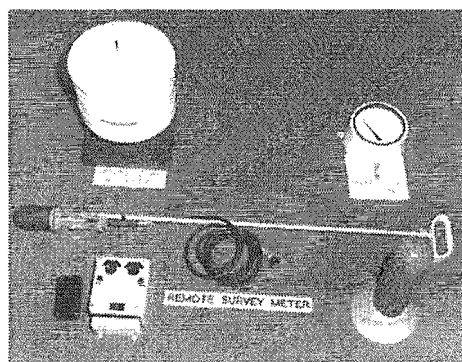
Such fears and fall-back positions have also to be taken in conjunction with intelligence reports compiled from various sources, internal and external, and transmitted from the UK Commission in Floriana. From 1962 onwards these became a regular, sometimes striking, sometimes startling monthly feature, linking up a tiny British elite of highly-placed decision-makers in civilian, military and diplomatic quarters, in Malta, London and Rome. Add to this the Mediterranean turbulence, from Libya to Cyprus. Matters were really coming to a head; here was the worst possible scenario for Independence, perhaps a point of no return.

While distancing herself from Malta, Britain still wished to secure the future, but there was a limit to what she could actually do once the bird would have flown out of the nest. Ever since the restitution of Responsible Government and the general election of February 1962, there was a slow build-up of intelligence on Mintoff and his party, on the their ally the General Workers Union, and more generally. Themes and topics recurred, but some aspects assumed more *gravitas* as time went on. Apart from the ongoing Mintoff-Gonzi 'politico-religious' conflict, which was not a security concern in itself, there was the problem of the rundown, ensuing discharges, and fears of the unrest which growing unemployment would cause. This included the dockyard problem and the question of Baileys, as the GWU was most militant in this area where Lorry Sant was becoming prominent (although Attard Kingswell was still firmly in the saddle by 1964).

Another and perhaps more serious area of concern was the lurch to the left which Mintoff's party was seen to be experiencing, evident in the affiliation with AAPSO and, through it or otherwise, contacts with powers considered unfriendly or hostile to the West. The 'neutralist' stance was generally seen to be a cover for pro-Socialist or rather pro-Communist inclinations; this belief was further strengthened by some meetings Mintoff and his aides were having. Speaking in June 1964 after a visit to Moscow, for example, Mintoff explicitly declared that the MLP wanted to have "allies", as others had. The MLP's "allies", he explained, were "those who did not want to have nuclear bases in the Mediterranean and those Arab states



The civil defence and territorial regiments in Malta had two underground 'operations' rooms, one at Attard near the Governor's palace, and a larger, deeper one at Targa Gap. The latter was equipped with communication facilities as well as radiological monitoring and nuclear detection instruments, in addition to having the means required for activities such as search and rescue, fire-fighting or other emergencies.



and the new states of Africa and all those who were against the British and the Americans in the struggle against imperialism".⁷ Although Mintoff said more than once that he did not want a dictatorship, Communist or Fascist, there was the not infrequent arousing discourse employed by the MLP and especially by Mintoff himself: hypothetical talk of civil war, arming the people, resistance by all means, the shedding of blood, friendly powers who would help them, and so on.

At the same time the MLP, backed by the GWU, was consistently opposed to any Defence Agreement with Britain *before* Independence - even though there was an ambivalence as to whether they would actually want one, depending on the terms, once Malta became independent. They were adamantly opposed to any 'sovereign base areas' arrangement, which had been the case with Cyprus; this opposition was shared less vociferously by the Nationalists, who at no point advocated any permanent sovereign bases. But in any case, the 'Mintoffian' side also wanted fresh elections and their constitutional changes *before* Independence. Behind the scenes, Mintoff was a consideration in the arguments and calculations made by the Ministry of Defence as well as by the Colonial Office throughout the deliberations on an Anglo-Maltese Defence Agreement, and unavoidably also on a Financial Agreement.

On the question of Defence as such, it was thought probable that Mintoff was "not completely opposed to a Defence Treaty, on the Libyan pattern," provided the rent was high enough. It was believed however that this too was what the Nationalist Government really wanted.⁸ Discussions about the Defence Agreement had been kept

⁷ "Il-Perit Mintoff qal li l-partit irid ikollu l-allegati kif ghandhom l-ohrajn. Huwa fisser li l-allegati tal-partit huma dawk li fil-Mediterran ma jridux bażijiet nukleari u dawk il-pajjiżi Gharab u l-pajjiżi l-godda ta' l-Afrika u dawk kollha li huma kontra l-Ingliżi u l-Amerikani fil-ġlieda kontra l-imperjaliżmu." See "Ir-RUSSJA Lesta Tindahal - Mintoff Ibassar Tixrid ta' Demm Jekk...", *L-Orizzont*, 22 June 1964.

⁸ Int. rep., 4 Dec. 1962 - 2 Jan. 1963, sec., para. 1, 926/1822/48655.

under wraps. When the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, Sir John Martin, visited Malta between 24th and 28th November 1963, it was announced that he had come to deal further with a number of matters connected with independence, following the prime minister's visit to London. In fact, Martin was accompanied by Mr Stephens, a senior official from the Ministry of Defence. They devoted nearly all their time to "intensive discussions with the Prime Minister about the draft Anglo-Maltese Defence Agreement." These provisions, which were similar to those contained in other agreements between the UK and independent countries, "came as something of a cold shock to the Prime Minister", according to the local Intelligence Committee. "He had probably expected a draft which would allow Malta to have her independence cake and eat it." However, it added, the discussions were amicable, and paved the way for more thorough examination of the draft in the near future. The fact that Martin's discussions had been almost wholly concerned with the Defence Agreement, and the presence of an official from the Ministry of Defence, "were successfully concealed; and the main effect on the public was to suggest that the Colonial Secretary was screwing the Prime Minister up to the mark."⁹

Whatever that snide remark was supposed to mean, there is no doubt that defence assessments and negotiations were being held secretly on an inter-governmental and inter-departmental basis. In the meantime, worries about Malta's internal security and Britain's ability to hang on or otherwise, increased. Ongoing developments about which intelligence was available referred to four main areas of concern. These were:

1. the organizational consolidation and increasing militancy of what was Malta's only general workers union, which was pro-Labour;

⁹ Int. rep., 6 Nov.-5 Dec. 1963, sec., para. 4, 926/1822/48655.

2. the fear that industrial unrest would escalate because of the rundown and that it would erupt chaotically taking an overtly political form;
3. the shifting leftwards of the MLP's ideological leanings coupled with growing contacts and dealings with neutralist or hostile parties and powers; and
4. very real fears about Malta's internal security and the prospect of a foreign-aided MLP-led *coup d'état* in Malta soon after Independence.

The steadily improving state of organization and mobilisation of both the MLP and the GWU was kept under surveillance. Apart from the GWU pro-Labour mass circulation daily in Maltese started in 1962 (*L-Orizzont*), both organisations were strengthening their operational bases. The Vicar General was even irked by the fact that MLP volunteers were working on the construction of the Freedom Press and MLP party headquarters on Sunday, a holy day of obligation, leading Mintoff to condemn this "interference" and promising to have the premises opened by May Day 1963.¹⁰

The GWU was completing the building of its new Headquarters, on which £54,000 had already been spent; a further £68,000 were being collected. The GWU levy on its present scale had produced £6,000; they hoped to get most of the rest of the money they needed from abroad. As a result of a circular sent out recently to all I.C.F.T.U. affiliates, they expected to receive £1,250 from the Transport and General Workers Union of the UK and £1,000 from the ISTADRUT of Israel. It was hoped that 75% of the premises would be ready for occupation by the end of 1963. Attard Kingswell meanwhile was very active in I.C.F.T.U. affairs, frequently travelling to their meetings or

¹⁰ For a picture of the Freedom Press in an advanced stage of construction, while the fund-raising campaign continued, see "Bix-xelin xelin tinbena s-sala", *Il-Helsien*, 17 Mar. 1964, p.1.

on their behalf to Europe, the Near East, even central and southern Africa.¹¹ On a month-long assignment for I.C.F.T.U. in Cyprus, Attard Kingswell was instrumental in a general reorganization of the free trade unions there.¹²

The GWU were busy forming a subsidiary association to include professional, scientific, technical, administrative, clerical and supervisory grades, to be known as National Association of Clerical and Supervisory Grades. Hitherto the GWU had been regarded as mainly for industrial employees. By spreading their influence to include these other grades, the GWU hoped to increase their strength considerably.¹³ This also meant a challenge to the existing unions representing civil servants and other professional and clerical related employees, as well as teachers, which were not MLP-oriented; it would reinforce the GWU's challenge to all smaller professional and technical unions, such as the one at the Dockyard, which represented non-industrials, by offering an alternative work-specific union membership largely controlled from the same central source. A near-monopoly of both industrials and non-industrials nationally would further strengthen the pro-Labour GWU when threatening, for example, to declare a 'sympathy' strike or even a general strike in support of pay claims to any particular section, such as the small, pivotal band of port auxiliaries, or otherwise. This unrivalled stealth would make it all the more necessary to have a professional and responsible trade union leadership accountable to a genuinely representative membership, particularly in such sensitive arteries such as the Grand Harbour and the Malta Dockyard. In the absence of that, any gross disruptions of the work force and general administration, which could be politically-motivated - at such a

¹¹ Int. rep., 3 Mar.-1 Apr. 1963, sec., para. 12, 10, 926/1822/48655.

¹² See "Kingswell lura f'Malta", *L-Orizzont*, 4 Apr. 1963, p.1, showing Kingswell with Makarios.

¹³ Int. rep., 7 Aug. - 5 Sept. 1963, sec., para. 11, 926/1822/48655.



Mr Attard Kingswell confers with Archbishop Makarios in Nicosia during his Cyprus assignment for the ICFTU in 1963, in a front-page report from *l-orizzont*.

delicate politico-economic hiatus for the country - would indeed give rise to considerations of internal security and public order under the provisions of the Emergency Powers Act, 1963. Mintoff's premonition about a "civil war" breaking out would thus become correspondingly nearer. It seemed nonetheless that there was a tacit understanding, at least between Attard Kingswell and Borg Olivier, that neither side would look forward to such a confrontation.

In May 1963 the MLP opened its new Headquarters in Marsa, where the weekly party organ *The Voice of Malta* now started being printed. In a tongue-in-cheek report on this, it was noted by British intelligence that the festive opening ceremony was largely attended, if the number of cars were anything to go by, "by a prosperous lot of Labour supporters."¹⁴

¹⁴ Int. rep., 7 Aug. - 5 Sept. 1963, sec., para. 10; 926/1822/48655. On the Emergency Powers Act, 1963, see below, pp. 457-460.

Whether its supporters had nicer cars or not, the PN in terms of organizational clout had nothing with which to rival either the GWU's or the MLP's apparatus, let alone the two of them combined. Without a proper Headquarters or a full-time staff, or even a proper newspaper, it had to rely on institutional supports such as the church, the information department, the Strickland papers, public broadcasting, the police force, and, as was customary, on a degree of patronage. The party machinery itself was largely inexistent or non-functional, loosely rallied around the figure of Borg Olivier as party leader and prime minister. Tradition and sobriety were rather on the PN side, especially with someone like Mintoff around; but it was competing against increasingly superior material odds: more alert, with a cultivated sense of hurt, and better mobilized than ever. As a party, the PN captured the sweep of local mood at the time and had a long-established nationwide pedigree and informal network; but otherwise, it was truly a miracle how this party won general elections, perhaps that is what it was.

While Borg Olivier's PN languished in a haphazard fashion, on 8th April 1964, in time for the referendum campaign, the GWU produced the first number of an English weekly newspaper (which later on became a daily), called *Malta News*. The GWU press board recommended to the general council that additional printing machinery should be bought without delay to cope with the ever increasing volume of work. The GWU also examined and approved plans for the formation of its own travel agency business: Untours Ltd.¹⁵

Weeks later, the GWU took what was seen as "an openly political step" when it sent a resolution to the British government reserving the position of "the trade union movement in Malta" with regard to any Defence Treaty negotiated by the British and Maltese governments. The purpose of these activities appeared to be to embarrass Borg Olivier in his dealings with the British government,

¹⁵ Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 12-13, 926/1822/48655.

in which, they probably apprehended, an agreement might be reached at their expense. They were thus taking first steps towards creating an atmosphere of "industrial uneasiness" in which, if political reasons so required, more serious industrial unrest could be started up.¹⁶

The increasing organizational expansion and mass mobilisation of both the GWU and the MLP, operating from their new twin Headquarters in Valletta and Marsa, with steady mass media exposure and a diversification of interests and incomes - for example, in the jobbing and travel business now - accompanied an accommodation of convenience with Malta's two leading production firms. Farsons, the brewers, came to some form of agreement with the MLP and started advertising in their newspapers again. Marsovin, still known as Cassar Brothers, the wine manufacturers, contributed £400 to MLP funds rather than advertise in MLP newspapers.¹⁷ This reluctance by Farsons and Marsovin to be seen as indirectly 'financing' the MLP was caused partly by the ever-present shadow of church censure and some earlier tiffs. It was also a reflection, probably, of the language, policies and suspicious contacts of Mintoff himself, to which they demurred. At the same time, these firms risked facing industrial trouble if the GWU made claims on them which they could not meet or if they were put on its black book and/or that of the MLP, especially if the latter were to gain power. To some extent they could thus be held ransom by their own employees if these joined the GWU, which the MLP could then influence.

As the weeks rolled by, with Borg Olivier and his delegation ensconced in London trying exasperatingly to clinch a final deal with the British on outstanding matters including defence and finance, the GWU involved itself in politics more directly, echoing if not

¹⁶ Int. rep., 7 May - 4 June 1964, sec., para. 17, 926/1822/48655.)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 21, 926/1822/48655.

parroting the MLP position. On 28th June its General Conference passed a resolution against the Malta Government's method of conducting negotiations on the future of Malta behind the people's back in London, particularly with regard to the Defence Treaty. The General Conference also condemned those who "oppress the workers and are trying to set up a Fascist dictatorship." In almost the same breath, the GWU welcomed the details of an apprenticeship scheme, which it had requested, at the dockyard. This was "a living example of co-operation between Union and Management." But the GWU drydocks section were believed to be actively considering an overtime ban in an attempt to secure an 8% pay rise. Mintoff himself started a series of articles in *The Voice of Malta* criticising the dockyard management. Government and British circles realised of course that a ban on overtime could immediately lose the Malta Drydocks the confidence of foreign ship owners, which the management had been successful in obtaining.

The UK Government Employees Section, a newly amalgamated section to which all GWU members working for UK government departments in Malta belonged, were considering taking industrial action over a dispute with SASO - RN, the Superintending Armament Supply Officer. This industrial action would be called if about sixty Maltese workers in the naval base became redundant in September.

The MLP's tendency over the years to boycott or challenge state broadcasting on grounds of discrimination was not, in the early Sixties, a security concern so much; it was more related to the 'religious human rights' campaign mounted by the party nationally and internationally. And it could have had an adverse effect on MLP clubs, which much preferred to have TV sets in their bars.¹⁸ However, this nurtured grievance later led the party to organise broadcasts from Egypt by arrangement with President Nasser's regime. The MLP also sought to broadcast to Malta from Ben Bella's Algeria.

¹⁸ Int. rep., 4 Dec. 1962 - 2 Jan. 1963, sec., para. 7, 926/1822/48655.

Broadcasting facilities were in fact granted to the MLP by Nasser in April 1964. Cairo Radio started broadcasting in Maltese in support of the MLP.¹⁹ The MLP broadcasts on Cairo Radio were for half-an-hour every day. Launched on 19th April 1964, they ended on 5th May 1964 (just after the referendum on the Independence constitution). However, Cairo Radio promised that they would be resumed in future. The broadcasts included recordings made by Mintoff and Lorry Sant, but seemed to contain nothing new by way of MLP propaganda. Their transmission being necessarily on short-wave band, it was assumed that few people could receive them in Malta²⁰ (forgetting perhaps that wireless transmission had hit Malta decades earlier, and that such morale-boosting broadcasts could be recorded and relayed through the many MLP clubs, transmission quality permitting).

A stricter political regime might have considered the beaming of such broadcasts to Malta from Egypt as somehow seditious, and banned or jammed them on grounds of foreign interference. The evening broadcasts commenced by an announcer saying every time: "This is the voice of Malta". At a meeting in Siggiewi, Mintoff said that although the Broadcasting Authority was denying the party the right to speak on Rediffusion and Television, "we are broadcasting just the same... Open the radio in the evening and from Cairo you will hear the voice of the Labourites".²¹ The MLP programmes were actually called *Din hija l-vuci ta' Malta*.²² Mintoff's speeches at mass meetings were a favourite item on Cairo Radio's 'Malta' agenda.

When in mid-May 1964 the Labour MP Lorry Sant returned to Malta after a month in Cairo, the Secretary of the GWU Dockyard

¹⁹ Annex, int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 1 (iv), 926/1823/48655.

²⁰ Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 9, 926/1822/48655.

²¹ "L-M.L.P. Qiegħed Ixandar mir-Radjo tal-Kajr", *L-Orizzont*, 27 Apr. 1964, p.8.

²² "Ix-Xandiriet mill-Kajr", *Il-Helsien*, 27 Apr. 1964, p.1.

Metalworkers Section was said to have been "on a month's trip overseas". He had left Malta together with an MLP delegation, which included Buttigieg and the MP Philip Muscat. "Dr Buttigieg and Dr Muscat had gone to New York to present a petition to the Special Committee on Colonialism at the UN", the report concluded, not once mentioning what Sant himself had actually been up to or where he had really been.²³

Tied to greater organization and mobilisation, including these foreign contacts and dealings, a wave of strikes or even industrial 'sympathy' actions, while the Services rundown gathered momentum, could have the gravest consequences. In the circumstances such an escalation of industrial unrest was preoccupying. In anticipation of discharges the GWU directed that Christmas parties at the workplace in December 1962 should be boycotted, even if children's parties were spared. A one-day national strike in protest was being rumoured and dates in January 1963 bandied about for it.²⁴ Baileys tried hard to improve their public image, for example through widely-distributed glossy brochures about their achievements; there was a vain hope that another company, Bethlehem Steel, would step in; the critical Muirie Report on the dockyard hung over the future; and there still was much uneasiness in the dockyard generally.²⁵ The first discharges took place on 4th January 1963, just as the dispute between Baileys and the British government was coming to a head. Following several strikes, the Baileys' management adopted a new and tougher attitude towards the GWU.

A dispute about the status of clerical workers produced a ban on overtime by the unions, and as a result commercial work ceased. This was essentially an inter-union conflict, with the GWU trying to

²³ "Lorry Sant Lura Malta", *L-Orizzont*, 15 May 1964.

²⁴ Int. rep., 4 Dec. 1962 -2 Jan. 1963, sec., para. 2, 926/1822/48655.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 4, para. 10.

obtain the right to represent non-industrials (as well as industrials) instead of the Malta Technical and Clerical Association. Two strikes by non-industrials were called by the GWU; subsequently this union held a yard gate meeting during which it called all dockyard workers out on strike for an hour. Baileys were then blamed for retaliating by discharging certain of the striking clerks, this leading to another GWU strike of all workers on 17th January at very short notice, with GWU pickets informing workers about the strike on their way to work. Although the matter had been submitted to arbitration, an indefinite clerical strike and an indefinite overtime ban were called by the same union. When, on 1st February, 26 mostly militant chargemen were ordered to report for overtime work and they refused, they were immediately handed notices of dismissal; but 24 hours later they were reinstated. Finally, "interim joint recognition" was agreed to, after an arbitration tribunal had found in favour of the M.T.C.A.²⁶ The agreement was reached with Attard Kingswell by the Chairman of Swan Hunters on 24th July 1963, naturally to continuing protests from the M.T.C.A.²⁷

But industrially and tactically, the dispute was moving beyond that, with decisions being taken on the spot by Attard Kingswell and Lorry Sant.²⁸ On 13th January 1963 the National Front Against Discharges, which included the church-associated *Moviment Azzjoni Socjali* (M.A.S.), held a day of protest, in which some 9,000 workers demonstrated; the MLP opposed this activity while the GWU hardly participated in it.²⁹

²⁶ Int. rep., 4 Feb.-3 Mar. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

²⁷ Int. rep., 1 July - 6 Aug., 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

²⁸ Int. rep., 3 Jan.-3 Feb. 1963, sec., para. 2-4, 926/1822/48655.

²⁹ Int. rep., 3 Jan-3 Feb. 1963, sec., para. 1-2, 926/1822/48655; but see also the criticism in *Il-Haddiem*, organ of the *Żghazagh Haddiema Nsara* (Young Christian Workers). On the National Front Against Discharges, see above, I, 5 and 6.

A lockout by Baileys was being rumoured, but in the last week of February the discharged employees were reinstated and the overtime ban was lifted.³⁰ No organization for action beyond normal trade union limits was known to exist, but the GWU and the MLP encouraged their members who worked in telephone exchanges "to pass on anything they hear", and there had been more than one instance of that recently.³¹ Mintoff's solution to the Bailey problem was nationalisation or at least a 51% holding in the company by the Government of Malta.³²

In mid-February the Legislative Assembly passed the Malta Dockyard (Temporary Provision) Act 1963, entrusting the administration of Bailey (Malta) Ltd., to a Council of Administration appointed by the Prime Minister. Bailey instituted an action against Borg Olivier holding this Act to be *ultra vires*. In fact the Prime Minister had appointed to the Council of Administration the eminent British names proposed by Sandys himself.³³ Mintoff was reported to have remarked that the Baileys legislation was a good thing but he was glad that the MLP did not have the responsibility for it.³⁴ In "a critical and sour mood", the MLP, instead of greeting with relief the appointment of Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson as Managing Agents of the Dockyard, concentrated on grumbling about the time taken in making this appointment, and lack of information about the contract. The announcement at Easter of plans for building new hotels, including a Hilton Hotel, and for a synthetic yarn factory, were criticized by the MLP on the grounds

³⁰ Int. rep., 4 Feb.-3 Mar. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655. On Borg Olivier's threat to resign if the dockyard workers were locked out or discharged *en masse*, see above, I, 8.

³¹ Int. rep., 3 Jan.-3 Feb. 1963, sec., f. 4, para. 9, 926/1822/48655.

³² *Ibid.*, para. 6.

³³ Int. rep., 4 Feb.-3 Mar. 1963, sec., para. 1, 926/1822/48655.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 4, 926/1822/48655.

that these projects would “give employment mainly to women.” They also criticized the long time being taken in building new hotels. While the fear of discharges remained, the announcement that the Garrison was to be increased by the 1st Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment passed almost without any public comment.³⁵

In a report prepared by Kenneth Dallas of the I.C.F.T.U. at the request of the GWU, published as *The Economic Situation of Malta*, Dallas held that the British government should extend the period of the Services rundown until 1972. Whilst the GWU rather supported this recommendation, it seems the MLP did not, as it ran counter to Mintoff's exhortations to the British to “get out.”³⁶

While work in the Malta Drydocks was increasing, various other strikes were ordered by the GWU. Between 4th and 9th May there was a strike of cooks at the R.N. Hospital in Bighi about their hours and conditions of work. On 12th May there was a 24 hour strike of all Port Auxiliary Service personnel about the delay in the settlement of a pay claim, as a result of which the tourist passenger liner *Caronia* cancelled a one day visit to Malta. Port Auxiliary Service tugs, manned by naval ratings, berthed three ships, including a tanker for Malta Drydocks. (The number of employees engaged to man these tugs was very small, but they were GWU members and they could paralyse port activity.) On 8th May the GWU ordered a ban on overtime for Port Auxiliary Services, which remained in force for months. The GWU leadership was apparently resisting militant pressure to bring about widespread industrial action in connection with the Services rundown to embarrass the Maltese government and re-assert their power. GWU officials were appointed to work with the MLP on a Joint Economic Committee intended to promote industrial and commercial enterprises for alternative employment to discharged workers.³⁷

³⁵ Int. rep., 1 Apr.-2 May 1963, sec., para. 1, 926/1822/48655.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 8. A copy of the Dallas report was forwarded by the GWU. to the T.U.C. in Britain and circulated to I.C.F.T.U. members.

³⁷ Int. rep., 3 May - 31 May 1963, sec., para. 8-11, 926/1822/48655.

The GWU allegedly prevailed on the MLP to give priority to economic considerations over political ones. On the Defence Treaty, the two said that if “unfortunately” they had to accept a British base, Malta should receive financial aid on a large enough scale for her to be economically viable when the Defence Treaty expired. They were apparently given to understand by Sandys that a Defence Treaty and the details of economic aid would be negotiated with an independent Malta, and that the question of economic aid would not be tied to a Defence Treaty. In his reactions to a statement by Borg Olivier in parliament about the draft constitution, Mintoff was said to have shown “unusual moderation”: welcoming the assurances about the Defence Treaty and economic aid; he criticised the monarchical system and proportional representation, and insisted that Commonwealth membership should be decided after Independence. He criticised the plans being made to create “a theocratic rather than a secular State” and complained about procedural restrictions and lack of information. At the opening of the all-party talks with the Prime Minister about the draft constitution, the MLP sent observers but Mintoff did not attend.³⁸ In the meantime MLP lawyers were instructed to study the Italian constitution on civil marriage and other aspects, just as the Curia warned of “the plague and threat of laicism” while the Diocesan Junta issued a leaflet called *What Mintoff Wants*.³⁹

At Malta Drydocks the new management succeeded in establishing good industrial relationships, but active GWU leaders complained to Borg Oliver that there was still a shortage of work and criticised the absence of any apprenticeship training scheme. They pressed for the immediate appointment of a Maltese to the Council of

³⁸ The leaders of the Centre Parties met Borg Olivier at the time, but they had earlier joined forces with the MLP voting an amendment to the Speech from the Throne requesting that public opinion be consulted before Independence. ‘The Stand Against Immediate Independence’, *Times of Malta*, 28 Nov. 1963, p.1. On these Government-Opposition hiccups, see above I, 4-8.

³⁹ Int. rep., 1 June - 30 June 1963, para. 2-8, 926/1822/48655.

Administration and complained that the policy of employing Maltese in responsible posts followed by Baileys had to some extent been reversed. While the overtime ban for port auxiliary employees remained in force, the GWU threatened to hold "a general strike" if their pay claim was not met. Another short strike was contemplated to coincide with the visit of another tourist passenger liner, but in that case naval ratings were expected to man the tug-boat to see it in, unless it cancelled the visit.⁴⁰ Dissatisfaction over salaries also led to a 'work to rule' by the Malta Civil Service Association from 5th August "due to the indifferent attitude of the official side on salary negotiations"; this was in addition to the continuing overtime ban at the port.⁴¹

On 20th February 1964 the GWU's General Council authorised its sections to claim an 8% increase in wages. They said that a general wage increase of 5% had been made but not conceded in 1961 (under the colonial administration) and that since then the cost of living had increased by a further 3%. The GWU leadership criticised the government's inertia in economic and industrial matters, blaming it for failing to consult the trade unions who were ready to co-operate. The 8% wage rise claim was lodged after close consultation between the economic sub-committees of the GWU and the MLP. As it was clear that the government would be finishing the financial year with a large deficit of some £600,000, and had asked for urgent financial talks with the British government, some GWU members were saying that their 8% claim "will be the death blow of the Government."⁴²

The GWU liked to think of itself as the only union really worth considering in Malta, because it was the largest. When the Minister of Labour wrote to ask for two GWU nominations for representation

⁴⁰ Int. rep., 1 June - 30 June, 1963, sec., para. 9-10, 926/1822/48655.

⁴¹ Int. rep., 1 July - 6 Aug. 1963, sec., para. 6-7, 926/1822/48655.

⁴² Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 13, 926/1822/48655.

on the Malta Labour Board and on the Malta delegation to the I.L.O. in Geneva, Attard Kingswell told the union's general council that as the Minister had not yet accepted the union's view about the basis of representation, the union should not nominate anybody, but should continue to press the Minister to allow "all four members on the Labour Board to be G.W.U. representatives."⁴³ There was also a question mark over the completion of work on No. 5 dock, as there would then no longer be a need to use the floating dock.⁴⁴

In addition to these mounting industrial disputes and the fear that the GWU could make a political issue of unemployment, Mintoff party's ideological leanings, contacts and dealings with other parties and powers - political and occasionally also military - were a serious cause of disquiet to Britain. Flirting with dictatorially inclined so-called neutral and non-aligned states, as well as with Communist ones, was invariably ferreted out and followed up so far as possible. Not satisfied with their association with the Socialist International, the MLP had gravitated towards the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation whose conferences and executive meetings it was attending.

The MLP having been invited to attend the AAPSO conference in Tanganyika, due at the end of January 1963, the Local Intelligence Committee took care to find out such seemingly petty things as to who issued the ticket, to whom, who paid for it, etc. In this case, a free ticket for one delegate - Mintoff informed his executive committee - was being provided; he obviously intended to go himself. He took with him one Joe Scerri, a businessman from Naxxar. In his onward travel from Tanganyika to Italy and elsewhere, Mintoff was accompanied by another businessman, Zaren Dalli, who had received a ticket, paid for by the Italian government.⁴⁵ During this MLP executive committee meeting,

⁴³ Add. annex, int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 9, 926/1823/48655.

⁴⁴ Int. rep., 5 June-3 July 1964, sec., para. 10-12, 926/1822/48655.

⁴⁵ Int. rep., 3 Jan.-3 Feb 1963, para. 7, 926/

Mintoff also disclosed a promise of an unspecified amount of financial help for the Freedom Press from German Social Democrats.⁴⁶ Before leaving for Dar-es-Salaam, Mintoff informed his close associates that in a talk prior to his departure, Dr Borg Olivier had enquired what would be his views on a National or Coalition Government to which - Mintoff said - he did not react.⁴⁷ If so, it is most unclear how the PN, or the MLP would have come round to such an understanding; perhaps Borg Olivier meant it as a sign of goodwill to permit greater cooperation on the independence issue.

After his visit to Italy in February 1963 Mintoff also went to Austria, West Germany and Czechoslovakia. In Prague, he was said to have described the situation in Malta and discussed "the possibility of Czechoslovakia granting aid to an independent Malta, free of Western bases." In considering a visit to Russia, he hoped, as he put it, "to obtain a lever" which he could use at the forthcoming 'All Party' conference in London. It was thought that contacts between Mintoff and the Czechs had first been made through their embassies in Rome and Vienna. The statement that Mintoff made on his return about having visited Czechoslovakia and about being prepared to take delegations elsewhere, including Russia, had led to "surprisingly little comment by his opponents." This report continued thus:

The Nationalist Party probably considers that there is something to be gained if H.M.G. becomes alarmed at Mintoff's references to contacts with Iron Curtain countries. Both the Nationalists and the Church probably welcome these developments, believing that Mintoff is now getting into deep waters. Mintoff's speech also contained threats

⁴⁶ Int. rep., 4 Dec.-2 Jan. 1963, sec., para. 9, 926/1822/48655.

⁴⁷ Int. rep., 3 Jan.-3 Feb. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

that in certain circumstances the M.L.P. might have to resort to violence and that "civil war" might break out.

Although these threats did not perhaps need to be taken too seriously, they did seem to show some justification for the Emergency Powers Act.⁴⁸

Among the agenda items intended for the MLP's annual general conference in April 1963, one concerned the broadcasting boycott, another the setting up of a fitting monument in the so-called *mizbla* at the Addolarata cemetery where those suffering church disapproval were being buried; and a third upholding a policy of "neutrality", the opposition to "propaganda favouring wars between one country and another", and that the party should wherever possible contribute to the achievement of "disarmament". The party should take advantage of every possible opportunity to prevent the use of Malta "as a base for destructive weapons."⁴⁹

Dealings with other parties and powers were intimately linked to ideological leanings. In assessing the MLP's annual general conference of April 1963, it was reported to London that there was "increasing evidence" that the MLP was "swinging further left, in keeping with Mintoff's efforts to obtain promises of aid from Eastern Europe." Mintoff was reported to have said at the annual general conference of his party that "in an independent Malta a Communist system and a Capitalist system could survive alongside each other." He had allegedly encouraged the editor of *Il-Helsien*, the MLP's daily, to reproduce news from Moscow broadcasts. Two out of six new members of the MLP National Executive were believed to be Communist sympathisers. This "move to the left" seemed likely to

⁴⁸ Int. rep., 3 Mar.-1 Apr. 1963, sec., para. 5-7, 926/1822/48655. On the Emergency Powers Act, see below, pp. 457-460.

⁴⁹ Int. rep., 3 Mar.-1 Apr. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

gain encouragement from the success of the Communists in the Italian general election just held.⁵⁰

The MLP's 'neutralist' and 'no bases' posture was underlined during the visits by Duncan Sandys to Malta in May through mass meetings and resolutions, at the same time as approaches were being made to the UN's Committee of 24. At one such meeting on 26th May, it was noted that the UK representative at this UN committee had given a false picture of the economic and political situation of Malta and that the Nationalist government was acting as "an accomplice" of the British government in hindering the anti-colonial movement. It was also decided that the Committee of 24 should be notified that the Nationalist government "was already making a Defence Treaty" with Her Majesty's Government "so that British and NATO forces should remain in Malta after independence". The UN were also to be told the Maltese prime minister, allegedly with British support, had already declared that his government would remain in office without elections until 1966 (in other words, it would be serving the four year term of office for which it was elected). Finally, the UN were urged not to be misled by the fact that the British representative had voted in favour of their resolution and to find means to enable the people to attain "full independence" and to elect a government "under free and democratic elections." To stir the pot a little further, during the mass meeting on 26th May Mintofoff read out a letter from a cousin of the prime minister, one Joseph Borg Olivier, wherein it was stated that in July 1961 Dr Borg Olivier had told him that he was not worrying about the general election as the Archbishop was going to declare it a mortal sin for anyone to vote for the MLP. Through the Department of Information, Dr Borg Olivier publicly and categorically denied the whole story. Two days later the MLP and the GWU announced joint plans for a demonstration, to coincide with the visit of Mr Sandys, about Independence "without ties", the economic situation, and widespread unemployment as a result of the

⁵⁰ Int. rep., 1 Apr. - 2 May 1963, sec., para. 5, 926/1822/48655.

Services discharges.⁵¹ At about the same time, Mintoff spoke of possibly arranging for members of the MLP delegation (at the forthcoming Malta Independence Conference) to visit the Soviet embassy in London: "in order to show Mr Sandys that we can do without British aid."⁵² During their visit to the Soviet embassy in London, the MLP delegation were said to have received a promise of support at the UN if and when their letter to the Committee of 24 came up. They were also promised economic aid for Malta after independence.⁵³ Typically, this particular paragraph in the intelligence report on Malta was marked by a black vertical line in ink in the margin by those seeing it at the London end - the Russian bear was poking his nose around.

By the Autumn of 1963 both the MLP and the GWU were inclined to prefer that Britain pronounce herself on the outstanding constitutional issues, with a suggestion from the GWU side that the major parties should "follow the example of the political parties in British Guiana and leave it to H. M.G. to decide." The centre parties cabled Douglas-Home asking him to reappraise the Maltese position regarding Independence. Mintoff, more drastically, said that if H.M.G. did not shoulder its responsibility by the end of May 1964 (ensuring human rights, holding fresh elections) the MLP would "appeal to the United Nations to take Malta over and make Britain quit."⁵⁴ Mintoff envisaged a UN force administering and protecting Malta as "coming from both East and West and from the neutral countries." He intended to exert pressure on the UN to bring this about.⁵⁵

The concern with financial aid was of course not restricted to the

⁵¹ Int. rep., 3 May - 31 May 1963, sec., para. 2-5, 926/1822/48655.

⁵² Int. rep., 1 June - 30 June, 1963, sec., para. 6, 926/1822/48655.

⁵³ Int. rep., 5 Sept.-4 Oct. 1963, sec., para. 9, 926/1822/48655.

⁵⁴ Int. rep., 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., para. 1-3, 926/1822/48655.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

MLP, nor was it seen as unrelated to defence. Unemployment itself tended to be viewed in a context of internal security. The P.C.P., for example, gave prominence to a statement by Dr Hastings Banda that he hoped to sign a Financial Agreement with Britain before the independence of Nyasaland (Malawi).⁵⁶ The most interested of all in this matter was undoubtedly the Nationalist government, but for the Opposition money was a regular stick, with Mintoff intent to show that he could do better by tapping other sources whoever these were. Whether Soviet financial aid could match the British aid, as Mintoff imagined, was a very moot point.

Closer to home, it had been reliably reported that Mintoff had been trying to contact Mr Harold Wilson, through Mrs Barbara Castle or Mr Fenner Brockway, "to see if they can work out a 'common policy' on independence before the Constitutional Conference in London". He also wanted to discuss with Mr Wilson "a plan which he has prepared on the Dockyard and on industry in general."⁵⁷ A case in point was the Socialist International meeting in Amsterdam on 8th September 1963, to which the MLP were invited to send two delegates. The intention was to barrack for fresh elections under UN supervision before independence but, at the same time, to avoid the subject of neutrality for Malta "for fear that if it were mentioned they might not receive the support of the Socialist Parties of N.A.T.O. countries." While the MLP wrote again to the UN insisting on an Order-in-Council from London to change the Malta constitution in accordance with their human rights principles, they now lifted the ban which had been imposed in 1958 on contact between party officials and British officials as it was felt that this ban was no longer serving a useful purpose; efforts should be made to win the confidence of the British government, or what they hoped would be the next British government. Almost overnight, anti-British graffiti were removed from many MLP club premises.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 1.

⁵⁷ Int. rep., 1 Apr.-2 May 1963, sec., para. 7, 926/1822/48655.

⁵⁸ Int. rep., 7 Aug. - 5 Sept. 1963, sec., para. 7-9, 926/1822/18655.

British socialists at the Socialist International meeting in Amsterdam were not as accomodating as the MLP had anticipated. The Congress adopted a resolution on Malta requesting the British government to hold an impartial inquiry into the last elections and to order fresh elections if appropriate, to safeguard human rights in the constitution and not to allow undue religious interference in future elections. The Maltese delegation appeared to have been disappointed by the attitude of the British Labour Party delegation which, so it was reported, would not move the resolution on Malta, but agreed to back it if it were moved by the Malta delegation. Furthermore, Dr Buttigieg, who led this delegation, said that the left-wing British MP Tom Driberg had told him that "the British Labour Party does not entirely agree with the M.L.P.'s Human Rights proposals or with its demand for fresh elections." Mintoff's comment was that the British Labour Party must have two faces, because they had not disagreed with the MLP's views on these matters when the MLP delegation was in London for the constitutional conference. Mintoff further commented that if the British Labour Party wished to break off relations with the MLP he would not be afraid, because "as we have fought them once we will fight them again."⁵⁹

That Wilson and his colleagues in the British Labour Party had reservations about what Mr Mintoff was up to may be substantiated from another source. There was at that time a Malta University Commission on which sat four English academics who came to Malta twice a year or so. Before coming out to Malta, one of this Commission's members had been talking to Harold Wilson. Wilson had said that "the British Labour Party did not intend to give Mintoff all-out support." Sir Maurice Dorman, who would have chaired the University Commission or been in the know in other ways, was told this directly by the scholar friend of Wilson (who had himself been a lecturer at Oxford before he went into politics). Dorman duly informed "the Security Service man here", the

⁵⁹ Int. rep., 5 Sept. - 4 Oct. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

number two man at the UK Commission reported back to London in turn. "Here is a Christmas titbit", Ian Watt began his letter to Christopher Eastwood on 23rd December 1963. Further on, he noted that support for Mintoff in the British press seemed to be confined to *The New Statesman* and *The Tribune* (both left-wing reviews). "I should not be surprised", he concluded, "if the report of Harold Wilson's attitude was correct."⁶⁰

In another move, Mintoff now claimed a promise of help from Algeria. Algeria had become independent on 3rd July 1962 after a very bloody civil war which almost caused another civil war in France and led to the inauguration of de Gaulle's Fifth French Republic in 1958, which has been haunted by the spectre of Algeria ever since. On returning to Malta from a visit to London, Mintoff was reported to have said that when he had been in London recently "the Algerian Ambassador there had offered him all help, including arms, if necessary." The Algerian ambassador in London had also told Mintoff that "without violence nothing could be achieved."⁶¹

In March, the MLP received from the Secretary of AAPSO an invitation to send one delegate to the AAPSO Council meeting in Algiers from 22nd to 26th March. The one free ticket offered by AAPSO was given to Joseph Camilleri, Assistant International Secretary of the MLP, who agreed to undertake the responsibility of speaking strongly against NATO, the Archbishop and the British Government. He was accompanied by the Hon. Dr Vincent Moran. At the Algiers meeting, a resolution was passed which pledged AAPSO to support the MLP against the "fascist dictatorship" of the Catholic hierarchy in Malta, and warned the British government

⁶⁰ Watt/Eastwood, 23 Dec. 1963, 432/62, conf., 926/1817/48655. The British members of the R.U.M. Commission in 1963 were J. S. Fulton, an Oxonian who was Vice-Chancellor of Sussex Univ., as Chairman; Prof. G. H. Bell, a physiologist from St Andrew's Univ., Prof. C. H. Hassal, a chemist from Swansea Univ., and T. C. Thomas, Senior Bursar at St John's, Cambridge.

⁶¹ Annex, int. rep., 6 Dec.-6 Jan. 1964, sec., f. 2, para. 3, 926/1823/48655.

against granting Independence to Malta under the conditions sought by the Borg Olivier Government.⁶² The MLP's Algerian connection continued, and evoked suspicions comparable to those regarding their Egyptian or Russian connections. At the end of May 1964, a stateless press correspondent of Turkish origin named Arslan Humbaraci visited Malta. He was reported to have been sent by the Algerian Government to give "a secret message to Mintoff" and to obtain information about the situation in Malta. He was to enquire about "the possibility of a civil war being started" in the Island. He was also to obtain "information about arms and airfields" and about the number of British troops stationed in Malta. Humbaraci was met and looked after by leading MLP officials and spent some time in private discussions with Mintoff.⁶³

Some months later we find Mintoff writing to Ben Bella about the talks he had had with Nasser, and suggesting that they should meet in the near future. When, in early July, Dr Moran and Joe Zerafa, the MLP general secretary, attended a conference on denuclearisation of the Mediterranean in Algiers, to which they had been invited by the Algerian Peace Committee with travelling expenses paid for by the Algerian regime, Mintoff had hoped to go and meet Ben Bella, but he did not go to Algiers when told by the Algerian ambassador in Rome that such a meeting could not be guaranteed. Moran and Zerafa had instructions to try and arrange a meeting with Ben Bella: Mintoff wished to discuss with him, among other things, MLP broadcasts from Algiers on the Cairo model. Apparently Mintoff was a bit touchy about not having met Khrushchev (when he visited Moscow in June), although it seems he had been promised this by the Russians in London.⁶⁴ He would not have wanted the same to happen to him in Algiers with Ben Bella.

⁶² Int. rep., draft, 7 Mar.-7 Apr. 1964, sec., para. 16, 926/1822/48655.

⁶³ Annex, int. rep., 7 May-4 June 1964, sec., para. 2, 926/1823/48655. See Humbaraci's book, *Algeria: A Revolution that Failed*, published in London by Pall Mall in 1966.

⁶⁴ Annex, int. rep., 5 June-3 July 1964, sec., para. 4, 926/1823/48655. On Mintoff's Moscow visit see below.

In the end, a meeting with Ben Bella did take place but Mintoff was not present for it. Moran and Zerafa met Ben Bella during the denuclearisation conference in Algiers from 5th to 9th July 1964 and discussed with him the possibility of arranging a meeting with Mintoff. Ben Bella told them that it was impossible to arrange this at present because of the tension in Algeria. However, he promised them diplomatic help in the MLP's struggle against the British Government; broadcasting facilities; financial help for "diplomatic missions" abroad, and "other means" of help in the event of a Fascist dictatorship being established in Malta and a Defence Treaty being signed between Malta and Britain.⁶⁵

Ahmed Ben Bella, the historic para-military leader of the *Front de Liberation Nationale* who was jailed by the French for several years, became premier of the new Algerian government in 1962-1963 and was elected Algeria's first president in September 1963. Little did Mintoff know, when he asked repeatedly for a meeting with Ben Bella in 1964, that Ben Bella would soon be deposed in a *coup d'état* by Houari Boumedienne and sent back to prison, this time by a fraternal Algerian regime, for fifteen years. There was another attempted *coup* in independent Algeria in 1967.

Apart from their ideological revolutionary connotations, once again such foreign contacts and dealings over-lapped directly with questions of internal security and the maintenance of law and order, especially after Independence.

After the AAPSO meeting in Algiers held in March, Mintoff was next expected to go to Israel, as the Israeli Labour Party and Malta's were on good terms; but from there he was expected to go to Moscow. It appeared that Mintoff was pressing the Russians to give a clear indication of support if they were interested in not having a "hostile missile base" in the Mediterranean:

⁶⁵ Annex, int. rep., 4 July-6 Aug. 1964, sec., para. 3, 926/1823/48655.

He has said that it was important for the M.L.P. to obtain a guarantee from a foreign power that it would assist in the establishment of new factories, and only Russia could give this guarantee. Furthermore, on independence, Malta needed to have the backing of a foreign power, otherwise a *coup d'état* might overthrow it. In this connection he pointed to the fact that the U.S.A. had been unable to overthrow Castro because of the support he had had from Russia.⁶⁶

Reports on MLP contacts with the U.S.S.R. continued unabated. On Mintoff's instructions a prominent member of the MLP executive, Dr Albert V. Hyzler, called on the Soviet delegation to the U.N. in New York and reported to them on the situation in Malta in September 1963. On his return to Europe from the U.S.A., where Hyzler, a medical doctor, was on medical business, he was said to have also visited the Soviet embassy in London, giving them information and documents which Mintoff had told him to pass on to them, receiving in return a promise of financial aid from the Russians.⁶⁷ It was later found out that while in the U.S.A., Hyzler visited the Soviet embassy in Washington. Hyzler also visited Cuba.⁶⁸ During a mass meeting in Birkirkara on 23rd February 1964, Mintoff announced that in reply to his telegram the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had invited him and his MLP colleagues to visit Russia in the near future.⁶⁹

At the same time, however, Mintoff wrote privately to Sir George Schuster, who had advised governments on economic problems in

⁶⁶ Annex, Int. rep., 6 Dec. 1963 - 6 Jan. 1964, f. 2, para. 7, 926/1823/48655.

⁶⁷ Int. rep., 7 Jan.-7 Feb. 1964, f. 2, para. 1, Hyzler then went to Rome where he met Archbishop Gonzi and Cardinal Cicognani.

⁶⁸ Annex, int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar., sec., para. 1, 926/1823/48655. Hyzler could simply have gone to Cuba on holiday or to have a look around and see what it was like; there was no suggestion that he had met Fidel Castro or any of his aides.

⁶⁹ Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 9, 926/1822/48655.

the past, indicating that Malta should cease to be a base and instead become "the Switzerland of the Mediterranean." In this letter to Schuster, Mintoff added that he would be ready to tolerate the presence of British forces in Malta for four to five years after Independence, for economic reasons. In a further twist, Schuster wrote to *The Times* in London saying that although on many issues he differed with Mintoff, he had found him the only Maltese public figure with energy and administrative ability. There being no possibility of economic viability for Malta in the foreseeable future, Schuster suggested that the political parties should agree to put Independence into cold storage for five years. Meanwhile, they should combine to form a National Government.⁷⁰

Just as this was going on, Archbishop Gonzi was invested with a Spanish decoration from the *claudilo* Francisco Franco, who was 'a contemporary' of Gonzi. In his speech of thanks, Gonzi made a favourable reference to General Franco as having helped to save Europe from Communism. The occasion actually was a ceremony for the return of a relic of St Paul which had been on loan to the Archdiocese of Tarragona in Spain; this was brought back by the Cardinal Archbishop of Tarragona who took part in a number of events during a three-day stay in the Island. It was he who invested Gonzi with the decoration.⁷¹ Franco's decoration to Gonzi was presented by the Governor of Tarragona, Senor Rafael Martinez. This was the Grand Cross of the Order of St Raimond de Penafort.⁷²

⁷⁰ Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, para. 3, 926/1822/48655. A mauled version of Schuster's letter to *The Times* appeared in *The Times of Malta*: "*The Times of Malta*, typically, printed Sir George Schuster's letter with only brief and inadequate mention of this reference to Mintoff, and quoted those parts of the letter which suit its arguments to support the P.C.P. case against Independence", the British intelligence report remarked.

⁷¹ Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 5, 926/1822/48655.

⁷² Tonna and Galea, *L-Arcisqof Gonzi*, *op.cit.*, p. 159. His Grace and the *claudilo* were both in their seventies: Franco having been born in 1892 was 72; Gonzi born in 1885, was 79. Franco's Falangist victory over the Republican, Communist and Anarchist



Archbishop Gonzi holds the relic of St Paul in the company of the Cardinal of Tarragona, Minister Paolo Borg Olivier and other dignitaries.

Although Gonzi was a collector of decorations, such a gesture, in the midst of a nationwide campaign led by the Diocesan Junta against any interference with the church's position and privileges, did the Nationalist Party of Malta no good at all, seemingly granting legitimacy to Minto's calls for an all-out resistance to Fascist dictatorship.⁷³ Franco's regime had a defence agreement with the U.S.A. in return for economic aid. The MLP raised a hue and cry

movement in Spain in 1939 had reverberated throughout the Roman Catholic world, with most Catholics automatically siding with the nationalist Franco who unfurled the Catholic and anti-Communist banner over a four year struggle, hence Herbert Ganado's celebrated journalistic headline at the time: "*Dhalna Madrid*" (We have entered Madrid).

⁷³ Apart from holding this Spanish Grand Cross, Gonzi was a Knight Commander of the British Empire; Assistant at the Papal Throne (*Assistens ad Solium Pontificium*; LL.D. (Honoris Causa) from the Royal Univ. of Malta; and Bailiff Grand Cross of the Sovereign Military Order of St John. In 1965 he also became a Commander of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

about Gonzi's comment. Workers collected signatures against a Fascist dictatorship and disassociated themselves from Gonzi's comments about Franco's Spain. Prominence was given to a plea made to Franco to grant an amnesty to thousands of political prisoners, including mine workers who had taken part in a strike.⁷⁴ The fossilized Fascist-Communist terminology of the Spanish Civil War revisited Maltese politics in 1964 with a misplaced Garcia Lorca passion for drawing blood.

In mid-February 1964 Mintoff and Arthur Scerri, the MLP's representative in the UK, visited the Soviet embassy in London. They were urged to arrange for an MLP delegation to visit Moscow soon, preferably setting off on 5th March. Mintoff told the Soviet embassy officials that in view of his many heavy commitments, he might not be able to go himself if they insisted on an early date. The Russians were keen that the first delegation should be led by him, adding that other delegations could be led by other prominent members of the MLP. It seemed likely that he would be accompanied by an MP, Dr Vincent Moran, who was also an executive member of the party.

While Mintoff was in London from 9th to 15th February he told Harold Wilson of his contact with the Soviet embassy and of his plans for an MLP delegation to go to Moscow. Wilson advised Mintoff that he should balance his contact with the Russians by a similar contact with the Americans. In reply to this, Mintoff said that the U.S. embassy in London had refused to receive an MLP delegation as they did not want to do anything behind the back of Her Majesty's Government. Similarly the American consul-general in Malta had told him (Mintoff) that with regard to his recent telegram to President Lyndon Johnson, no steps could be taken which might prejudice Anglo-American relations.

⁷⁴ See e.g. 'Dekorazzjoni ta' Franco lil Mons. Gonzi', *Il-Helsien*, 18 Feb. 1964, p.1; 'Il-Grazzi ta' l-Arcisqof Gonzi lil Franco - Haddiema Jipprotestaw', *ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1964, p.1; 'Franco Mheggeg Minn Niesu Stess Biex Juri Hniena - Il-25 Anniversarju tar-Rebha Tieghu', *ibid.*, 30 Mar. 1964, p.1.

In another context, Mintoff was reported to have said that the Israeli Foreign Minister (Golda Meir) had warned him not to trust the British Labour Party. Commenting on this, Mintoff said that for some time now he had not trusted them fully, largely because they had not fully supported the MLP in the latter's demands for elections and human rights.⁷⁵

Towards the end of March, Mintoff told leading members of the MLP that they should go to Moscow by not later than April, irrespective of whether the constitution was being discussed in parliament or not at that time. On the way back, he said he would visit Yugoslavia. Speaking of the difficulties with which the British and American governments were faced in Libya, Mintoff said that those two governments had "their backs to the wall", and the situation in the Mediterranean should be exploited as much as possible.⁷⁶

This long-mentioned and twice postponed Moscow meeting was now being scheduled for May, with Arthur Scerri from London now expected to accompany Mintoff.⁷⁷ In fact, it took place in early June.

Speaking to reporters on 2nd June, Mintoff said that he would go on from London to Moscow, at the invitation of the Soviet government, to discuss possible arrangements for economic and financial aid to Malta if an MLP government were to achieve power after Independence. Some evidence suggested that it was only when Sandys told Mintoff that he could not have talks with him about Malta right then, that Mintoff decided to embark on the Moscow mission - as if he had kept that as a trump-card. Mintoff indicated that a visit to Moscow would be particularly timely, because of the presence there of Wilson and his colleagues from the British Labour Party.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Annex, int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar., para. 4, 926/1823/48655.

⁷⁶ Int. rep., draft, 7 Mar.-7 Apr. 1964, sec., para. 2-3, 926/1823/48655.

⁷⁷ Annex, int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, para. 5, 926/1823/48655.

⁷⁸ Int. rep., 7 May-4 June 1964, sec., para. 16, 926/1822/48655.

Accompanied by Moran, Mintoff was in the Soviet Union for a whole week from 4th to 11th June. As guests of the Supreme Soviet, they met officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Department of External Trade. From the outset Mintoff and the MLP press maintained that there was nothing that was not respectable in a visit to Russia: Mintoff, it was said, was following in the footsteps of several celebrated statesmen who had been to Moscow and had survived. The morale of many MLP members was raised with expectancy about what Mintoff had achieved by this visit. Others too probably would have contrasted Mintoff's initiative and his readiness to tell the public about his travels, with the silence that the prime minister had kept for so prolonged a stay in London.⁷⁹

The very fact that Mintoff had gone to Russia provoked the Diocesan Junta into public condemnation, issuing, on 6th June, a statement to the press condemning what they described as "this dangerous step" as "an insult to Catholic Malta and one which no Catholic had as yet taken." In a vigorous reaction to this Buttigieg issued a statement exposing the wealth possessed by the church, ridiculing the assertion that no Catholics visited Russia, and describing the Junta's attack as nothing but a smokescreen to cover up for Borg Olivier's failures in London. In a counter-statement, the MLP said that other Catholics had visited Moscow, mentioning two leading Italian politicians, Gronchi and Fanfani.⁸⁰

In a public meeting on his return, Mintoff painted his visit in respectable terms and as consistent with his party's declared policy of neutralism. He said he had told the Russians that he did not want to introduce Communism into Malta, but he spoke with admiration of what he had seen in Russia. He attacked Borg Olivier for collaborating with the British in their desire to rent bases in Malta.

⁷⁹ On Dr Borg Olivier's departure for London soon after the referendum result and its aftermath, see above, I, 9-10.

⁸⁰ 'Il-M.L.P. Iwiegeb lill-Gunta', *l-orizzont*, 12 June 1964, p.2.

The Russians, by contrast, were not interested in having a base in Malta but were only concerned with the elimination of the British one. Implying that Russia was a force for peace in the Mediterranean, Mintoff said that in conditions of peace there would be work and prosperity for all in Malta.⁸¹

It was in this meeting in Naxxar on 21st June that Mintoff said that his party were "ready to bring arms from abroad and to arm the people". Indicating that Russia would move in to assist if a Fascist dictatorship were to be set up in Malta, Mintoff promised to arm every Labourite "to the teeth". And if there was "a moral country" in the world, he told his listeners, "this was Russia." He again defined his party's allies as those Arab and African and any other states who opposed British and American "imperialism", adding that all those who were anti-Fascists were the MLP's friends. He also asserted that the British store at Hal Far (the Naval Air Station in Malta) contained nuclear warheads for torpedoes. It was reported that Mintoff could have been receiving unintentionally misleading reports about recent activities at the Torpedo Proving Plant near Hal Far. The MLP were also alleging that the American Catholic Relief Services (C.R.S.) were not giving goods to needy Mintoffian families. As the distribution of these goods was in the hands of the parish priests, some of whom seemed only too likely to discriminate against M.L.P. supporters, it was believed that these reports could well have been true.

Outreach to the Soviet bloc paid dividends in more immediate ways. The United States Government now invited Mintoff, together with Felice, to visit the U.S.A. for a six weeks 'leadership' trip arranged by the State Department. Outwardly, Mintoff said that for him to visit the U.S.A. he would first have to obtain permission from his party.⁸² Behind the scenes, Mintoff took pains to explain to the U.S.

⁸¹ Int. rep., 5 June - 3 July 1964, sec., para. 3, 926/1822/48655.

⁸² "X'Tghallimna minn Moscow - Nahdmu, Nirsistu għall-Paċi - Stedina mill-Amerika", *Il-Helsien*, 22 June 1964, p.1, p.4. See also the banner headlines 'Mintoff

consul general that, in talking about the use of violence, he had been most careful to indicate that he only contemplated force in particular circumstances, namely those where a Malta Government would, after independence, have amended the constitution in such a way as to deny to the MLP any prospects of obtaining power by constitutional means. In passing this information to British officials, the U.S. consul general indicated that Mintoff had seemed anxious that this explanation should reach British ears. Mintoff had also indicated to the U.S. consul general that he no longer demanded that there should be elections before independence. There were indeed signs that Mintoff would be pleased if Independence could be deferred until after there had been a general election in the UK when, so he expected, he would have an accommodating Labour government in the UK to deal with. This *tête-à-tête* with the U.S. consul general could also have had something to do with indications that the Russians in fact had made no special promises of help to Malta.⁸³ Perhaps the Americans knew that.

Resort to force, however - even mention of "tribunals of the people" - had been part of Mintoff's discourse for years; as Independence approached, fuelled by the ecclesiastical sanctions, and as the MLP came to be seen as potentially the alternative government of an independent state, it increased. In November 1963 during a speech at Msida shortly after an Msida woman had been refused religious burial, for example, Mintoff had declared that the MLP would not go to the courts to contest their rights. They would fight for their rights "as others have fought for them...It was not afraid to do so at the time of Laycock, when he had Commandoes and warships at his

Jiltaq għal Moscow - Tahdidiet fuq Ko-operazzjoni Ekonomika u Kummerċjali', 'Ir-RUSSJA Lesta Tindahal', *L-orizzont*, 22 June 1964, p.1, p.8. There were similar sensational reports in *Malta News*, and less prominently in the *Times of Malta*, 22 June 1964, p.2, with a sub-heading entitled "Arming Partisans".

⁸³ Int. rep., 5 June - 3 July 1964, para. 4, sec., 926/1822/48655.

command. The Party was not afraid today and if justice is not done by it, it will resort to force..."⁸⁴

On 5th April Mintoff and Zarenu Dalli, the MLP international secretary, left Malta suddenly for Rome and thence to Cairo. The invitation to visit Cairo, together with the offer of two tickets, was brought by the MLP delegates who attended the AAPSO meeting in Algiers, where they met the Egyptian delegation. It was discovered that the invitation to Egypt was a personal one from Gamal Abdel Nasser; it came in reply to a request which Mintoff had made to meet Nasser in January. It was reported that Mintoff and Nasser would discuss "independence and the Base." Meanwhile, certain MLP extremists were reported to be pressing for the party to resort to violence without further delay, but Mintoff told them that while the question of taking action was under consideration, they should remember that at the present time it was important not to take any hasty action which might spoil their relations with the British Labour Party.⁸⁵

Mintoff's visit to Cairo lasted four days. According to press reports, he was received at the airport by the chamberlain of the presidential palace. Mintoff was quoted as saying that he was in Cairo to discuss with Egyptian officials the means of "consolidating friendly relations between the two countries and reviewing the problems facing Malta." Mintoff was further reported in the Egyptian press that he condemned British aggression in the Yemen, supported the evacuation of British forces from Aden, and advocated the liquidation of Imperialistic bases which threatened surrounding Arab countries.

The MLP press gave much prominence to Mintoff's meeting with Nasser, pointing out that it was unusual for any "statesman" to visit

⁸⁴ "Religious War" in Last Elections', *Times of Malta*, 28 Nov. 1963, p.2.

⁸⁵ Add. annex, int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 2-5, 926/1823/48655.



President Nasser greeting Mr Mintoff in Cairo in April 1964.

Egypt so soon after a visit to Israel. It seemed probable, the British figured, that one reason for Mintoff's visit to Cairo was the belief in Malta that the collapse of the Anglo-American position in Libya was imminent, and that this would give added importance to Malta as a base. This, in turn, was seen to affect the issue of Independence and the Anglo-Maltese Defence Treaty.⁸⁶

During Mintoff's Cairo visit in April, it was reliably reported, President Nasser promised to support the MLP with financial aid, broadcasting facilities and naval work for the drydocks. In addition, he would help them stage a *coup d'état* after independence. Apart from the invitation to Cairo, the Egyptian regime paid the expenses of an MLP delegation to the UN. A secret pact was made by Mintoff and Nasser guaranteeing that any Defence Treaty signed by the present Malta Government and the British Government "will be annulled by an M.L.P. Government."⁸⁷

At the UN, the Egyptian-financed MLP delegates were impressed by the knowledge and understanding of the situation in Malta shown by the Communist delegates, who were particularly interested in the

⁸⁶ Int. rep., 7 Mar. - 7 Apr. 1964, sec., para. 17, 926/1822/48655. Mintoff went to Israel for a fortnight's visit at the invitation of Mapai, the Israeli Democratic Socialist Party, whose printing establishment were offering some machinery for the MLP's Freedom Press; he met with the Prime Minister, Mr Levi Eshkol, and the Foreign Minister, Mrs Golda Meir, the Israeli General Federation of Labour Histadrut, as well as visited the Weizmann Institute and the Hebrew University. Mintoff, who was accompanied by his English wife Moyra née de Vere Bentinck, also met hoteliers, including Kurt Levy of the Mlonot Company, who would be operating Malta's new Preluna Hotel in Sliema. (See "Iż-Żjara ta' Mintoff f'Israel", *Il-Helsien*, 4 Feb. 1964, p. 5, but on the hotel construction aspect see also "A Visitor to Israel", *Times of Malta*, 10 Feb. 1964, p. 3. Mintoff was the consultant architect of a number of the sprouting hotel enterprises, including the Dragonara complex.)

⁸⁷ Annex, int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 1-3, 926/1823/48655. On Egyptian and other foreign offers for help with a *coup d'état* see the discussion on internal security, below, *passim*. On the Egyptian radio broadcast facility for the MLP, see the references to the broadcasting issue, above.

Defence Treaty and were anxious to obtain information about it.⁸⁸ Despite protests by Borg Olivier, the Committee had decided to put Malta on the agenda; debates took place on 28th and 30th April. After a brief discussion the chairman had read out a wishy-washy 'consensual' text with however did not really meet the MLP's demands. A third member of the delegation, whose first stop was Rome, had gone from there to Cairo. This was Lorry Sant.

Mintoff said privately that Nasser described Malta to him as "pointed at Egypt".⁸⁹ At a public meeting in Malta Mintoff indicated the nature of his support for Nasser by saying that Malta was no longer a threat to Russia, but that, in the wrong hands, it would constitute a threat to other countries.⁹⁰

Sant must have had an important mission to attend to in Cairo because he stayed there for nearly one month: from 17th April to 14th May 1964. Sant was a man to watch, a defiant, energetic firebrand. Destined to become one of the most controversial and powerful politicians in Malta before being suspended from the 'new' MLP in 1990, he entered politics in his teens, became secretary general of the Labour League of Youth and, in 1959, editor of its newspaper *The Struggle*. The first MLP official to incur Gonzi's wrath and an interdict with it on 9th April 1960 as editor of *The Struggle*, after an article insulting to the Archbishop was published under a pseudonym, Sant kept one foot in the MLP and another in the GWU for many years. Now what exactly was Sant doing in Cairo, while the referendum campaign raged in Malta? That was the time when the MLP were broadcasting through Radio Cairo. With Danny Cremona, Joe Zerafa and some others, he would not have felt out of place in the MLP's Action Committee for "other methods" which had been set up.

⁸⁸ Annex, int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, para. 7, 926/1823/48655.

⁸⁹ See 'Nasser Jiftakar fl-Attakki minn Malta', quoting *The Observer's* interview with Nasser, 6 July 1964, p.1.

⁹⁰ Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655.

Sant was reported to have said privately that the Egyptians were prepared to give military training to 1,000 Maltese to prepare them to take over the government by force. The Egyptians proposed that, in view of the difficulty of getting so many people from Malta to Egypt for this purpose, the trainees should be recruited from amongst Maltese who were living abroad. Having been trained, they could come to Malta as tourists or as if to visit their families. The Egyptians asked Lorry Sant whether, as Secretary of the Malta Drydocks Section of the GWU, he could arrange for the receipt and concealment in Malta of boxes of arms and ammunition which might be brought on Egyptian ships coming to Malta Drydocks for repair. The Egyptians also wanted to know how many “forts” there were in Malta and whether the Royal Malta Artillery could be trusted to take part in any action with the workers.

To the compilers of this intelligence survey of Lorry Sant’s Egyptian exploits, it seemed “very unlikely that the Egyptians would find many Maltese living abroad who would be willing to undergo military training in Egypt.” What they found more serious was “the readiness of the Egyptians to assist with the smuggling of arms” into Malta:

It might be difficult for them to do this successfully through Malta Drydocks but it would be easy for arms to be smuggled in with the assistance of Maltese fishermen, many of whom already indulge in smuggling of other commodities. A high percentage of them, particularly in the south of the Island, are strong supporters of the MLP.

The General Manager of Malta Drydocks was told, in strict confidence, about this story. He promised to keep British officials informed of any enquiries made by Egyptian shipowners.⁹¹

Two MLP members were again invited to visit Cairo, at Egyptian expense, after the Lorry Sant sojourn there, in order to take part

⁹¹ Annex, int. rep., 7 May-4 June 1964, sec., f. 1, para. 1, 926/1823/48655.

TOP SECRET
INWARD TELEGRAM

23

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES

FROM MALTA (Acting U.K. Commissioner)

Simplex D. 4th June, 1964.
R. 4th " " 22.50 hrs.

PRIORITY
TOP SECRET
No. 220.

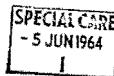
My immediately preceding telegram.

Following is summary of annex to monthly intelligence report 7th May to 4th June, 1964.

1. Sant who accompanied Mintoff to Cairo has said that Egyptians are prepared to give military training to 1,000 Maltese as preparation for a *coup d'etat* trainees to be recruited from among Maltese living abroad.
2. Egyptians also asked Sant if he could arrange for arms to be smuggled into Malta in Egyptian ships coming to dry docks. General Manager of Dry Docks has been told of this, and has promised to keep British officials informed of any enquiry made by Egyptian shipowners.
3. Humbaraci, stateless Press correspondent of Turkish origin visited Malta 29th to 31st May and Report is, he was sent by Algerian Government, with message for Mintoff and to find out about situation in Malta, particularly about possibility of civil war and about British military and air dispositions here. He was looked after by M.L.P. officials and had private discussion with Mintoff.
4. M.L.P. leadership have considered whether to organise some form of underground movement, but no formal decision has yet been made. Mintoff apparently in favour, but wishes to handle matter himself.
5. Mintoff has instructed that M.L.P. should re-organize its structure in interests of efficiency and secrecy and to deal with its growing overseas contacts. Likely that a personnel section will be set up to deal with secret reports on activities of M.L.P. members. A small "bureau" is to be established to help Mintoff settle matters of particular urgency, and intention is that national executive will then meet monthly only.

Distribution:

Secretary of State
Minister of State
Mr. Eastwood
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Mr. Higham
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Mr. Downie.



J.I.C. External Distribution

A synopsis of an annex to the British intelligence report on Malta for the period 7th May to 4th June 1964. These reports were compiled from various sources, which must certainly have included one or two MLP moles. In a small society like Malta it was difficult to keep secrets, especially in cocktail parties, where there may have been a tendency to exaggerate and conjecture.

in the Revolution Day celebrations. The two who went up were Joseph Camilleri from the party's international secretariat, and Saviour (Salvu) Sant (Lorry Sant's brother).⁹² Camilleri and Sant left for Cairo on 18th July and returned to Malta on 1st August. Tickets for their journey were sent to Malta by Assad Rageh, General Secretary of the Federation of Arab Trade Unions.⁹³

The cumulus of references from different sources about a would-be *coup d'état* was of particular concern, because in that way Malta could become an enemy asset. Such a Malta would be a destabilising factor in the Central Mediterranean, with its airfields, harbours and communications network possibly in enemy hands. Anglo-Maltese 'investment' in Malta over the best part of two centuries could be handed to a silver platter to a revolutionary-minded, Arab-linked 'neutralist' bloc, or even to the Soviet one. Fears of such an eventuality could not have helped Mintoff and his party - at least not in the short-term - in his bid for power, although he may have seen them as arm-twisting tactics to get fresh elections and the religious human rights clauses inserted into the constitution. Such fears made it more necessary to ensure that the Maltese government would have recourse to British assistance if needed to suppress any attempted overthrow, or in the event where disturbances proved too much for the Maltese forces to handle. All this was taking place while a Defence Treaty was being negotiated between the Maltese and British governments, when no hard-and-fast decision had been taken; nor did a consensus exist as to whether Malta should be granted full independence, when or how.

Mintoff's grand plan for an integrated Italo-Maltese *entente*, federal, regional or other, was a different story although Britain had no desire to play second fiddle to Italy in Malta which was considered to belong to the British sphere of influence. The British in Malta

⁹² Annex, int. rep., 5 June-3 July 1964, para. 5, 926/1823/48655.

⁹³ Annex, int. rep., 4 July-6 Aug. 1964, para. 4, 926/1823/48655.

must have had at least one mole inside or very close to the MLP's executive committee. It was thus a matter for report that, at the end of December 1962, during an MLP executive committee meeting, Mintoff revealed to those around him, in confidence, that he had received a fresh invitation to visit Italy, and that there was important business to deal with, including a visit to San Marino.⁹⁴ While the details of the MLP's Italo-Maltese plan may not have been divulged or discussed in detail, the party executive came to know that Mintoff had struck a rapport with Nenni's *Partito Socialista Italiano*. Months after Mintoff's Italian tour, the P.S.I. invited the MLP to send a delegate to the P.S.I. congress in Rome. Nenni's party however was not a member of the Socialist International. According to the statutes of the Socialist International, members of democratic socialist parties affiliated to it were not allowed to attend meetings of non-member parties (such as Nenni's). The MLP therefore decided to decline the invitation and to send Nenni a cable of greetings.⁹⁵ Malta under the aegis of a neighbouring NATO member such as Italy, would still have been incomparably preferable to any deviation to the East or to the South.⁹⁶

Discussions concerning the use of Malta as a U.S. base for Polaris submarines and/or for a tropospheric scatter station for the U.S. Air Force, had the blessing of the British government, who waived its objection to direct consultations, if appropriate, between the Maltese and American governments. The British would still have known exactly what went on. Moreover, as Carrington announced, Britain was not thinking of basing *her* polaris submarines in Malta, so she had no direct interest in the prospect. Some discussion of these Western-linked defence possibilities surfaced in the Maltese press in

⁹⁴ Int. rep., 4 Dec.-2 Jan. 1963, sec., para. 8, 926/1822/48655. On the Italian option, see above, II, 12.

⁹⁵ Int. rep., 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., para. 9, 926/1822/48655. On Nenni, see above, II, 12.

⁹⁶ On Maltese-Italian relations prior to Independence, see above, esp., II, 12.

February 1963 and again in September after the Borg Olivier-Kennedy meeting. Nobody opposed the idea "outright", but neither was there any well-informed examination of the political problems involved;⁹⁷ in fact the MLP was hostile to the idea. What most influenced British thinking in this domain was the prospect of a non-Western or anti-Western departure after independence, rather than any close links which an independent Malta could develop with Italy or the U.S.A.

Closely tied to defence was internal security. When the Emergency Powers Order-in-Council 1939, under section 4(2) of the Malta Order-in-Council 1961, was due to cease to have effect after 2nd March 1963, that is after the expiration of the 12 month period indicated, the Borg Olivier administration passed through parliament an Emergency Powers Bill. The coming into action of the Act before 3rd March 1963 was authorised by section 4(2) of the constitution.⁹⁸ The new Act excluded deportation and the death penalty, but made provision for an emergency situation arising and the powers needed to control it. The Labour Opposition savaged the legislation, saying that Borg Olivier was assuming "dictatorial powers". He was giving himself very wide powers and including an enabling law which provided for "the most undemocratic regulations imaginable." The Prime Minister now had the right on his own initiative to advise the Head of State to declare that a public emergency existed and to issue the relevant proclamation. This law made no distinction between an emergency in time of war and in time of peace. It resembled "acts passed by undemocratic African governments." According to the MLP, it made provision for the detention of persons in time of peace; it could make strikes illegal; there was no limit to the punishment which could be incorporated in the regulations, other than deportation and death; the procedure our courts normally followed could be altered; and there was no

⁹⁷ Int. rep., 4 Feb.-3 Mar. 1963, sec., para. 11, 926/1822/48655. On Malta as an American base see above, II, 11.

⁹⁸ Min., Crawley/Cruchley, 22 Feb. 1963, 926/1881

provision against conscription and forced labour. This “enabling law” was “too wide open” and gave the Prime Minister “dictatorial powers.” Before being brought to the House it ought to have been presented to a select committee of the House, and it ought not to have been hurried through. The MLP condemned it “most vehemently... We do not and will never tolerate acts that could easily suppress Human Rights.”⁹⁹

Winding up the debate on the second reading, Borg Olivier categorically denied that the British government had intervened in this bill: there had been no consultation between the two governments about it. It could be said that the British government had washed its hands completely in this matter, after having provided in the constitution that certain emergency powers would lapse within a certain time; it then became the responsibility of the Maltese government to legislate in order to meet any emergency. “The British Government was allowed to intervene, at the time of the last Labour Government, when the struggle for Malta’s independence was blocked by an attempt to take Malta into the blind alley of integration”, the Prime Minister said.

The bill clearly provided that regulations issued after the proclamation of an emergency would be subject to the provisions of the constitution. Even the 1961 constitution, which Dr Ganado had welcomed as “the most liberal ever granted to Malta”, provided for the detention of persons in certain circumstances. Continuing after an intervention by Dr Ganado who rose to say that he wanted him to abide by the constitution, Dr Borg Olivier noted that nowhere was it said that a two-thirds majority in parliament would be required in all cases to declare a state of emergency. Where the constitution required a two-thirds majority he assured the House that he would abide by it. In other cases, this would not be required. The Prime Minister asked Members

⁹⁹ ‘Prime Minister Takes on Dictatorial Powers’, *The Voice of Malta*, 3 Mar. 1963, enc. 926/1881.

to contemplate the possibility of having an Opposition inciting to disorder and causing an emergency. In such a case the Government might well find it impossible to obtain the support of two-thirds of the Members of Parliament to take over emergency powers... it was not possible to draw comparisons with the House of Commons at Westminster. The House of Commons had no written Constitution and acted on common sense. All Opposition Members had agreed that the Government should have a reserve of powers to meet an emergency.

The Nationalist Party, Dr Borg Olivier went on, had protested against deportations at the time of the last war, because they were illegal. Internment had been accepted in principle, although one had to go into the circumstances leading to the internment of particular persons:

In certain cases photos taken at Nationalist meetings were enlarged, certain individuals picked out, and the Strickland family then went to the Governor of the day and told him: "These must go." God forbid that there should be another period of emergency, but... he did not want to be accused of allowing emergency regulations to lapse without taking steps to meet the situation.

In debating this highly charged issue Borg Olivier was on solid ground because he had been the only elected member to vote against deportations in 1942; the Stricklandian and Labour parties had supported them. Mabel herself had not been involved and she protested at such mention of her family name. The Prime Minister's discourse was also politically charged when he stressed that his party had promised to maintain law and order - a jibe at Mintoff's handling of the situation in 1958. Continuing, Borg Olivier observed that the power to suppress strikes in an emergency was already provided for under the 1924 Act; but he was not legislating in order to suppress the right to strike:

Now that Malta was approaching independence, the people must elect to power people who would use, not abuse,

power. The people of Malta must learn to have confidence in themselves... So long as strikes were not illegal, and so long as they were not meant to cause disorder during a period of emergency, strikes would be allowed to take place. But strikes aimed at disrupting the life of the community would not be allowed because the present Government had promised the electorate that they would maintain law and order in these Islands... If an irresponsible Government was possible so was it possible to have an irresponsible Opposition...¹⁰⁰

Another perspective of this legislation was that many were worried lest *Mintoff* could find himself vested with these emergency powers:

... although the Emergency Powers of the Constitution were due to expire on 3rd March, the Prime Minister waited until the last minute before taking action - typically. This legislation has attracted widespread criticism as giving the executive too much power at the expense of the legislature, and as out of keeping with democratic self-government... Many people are worried lest one day *Mintoff* should obtain power, and find himself with these Emergency Powers in his hand.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See the detailed parliamentary reports in *The Times of Malta*, 4 Mar. 1963: "Emergency Powers Bill passed with amendments - Deportation and Death Penalty excluded", enc. 926/1881. Dorman assented to the bill on 2 March, the same day that it was passed, and took offence at the suggestion that he should have first referred it for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure, as suggested by the legal advisers, because amendments had been made to it after instructions to assent had been received. Dorman insisted that the bill was urgent, that the amendments were liberalising measures, and that he had the power under section 76 of the constitution to assent to it on his own authority. He said the legal advisers' proposal was "rather like baby sitting." Dorman/Sandys, 5 Mar. 1963; Dorman/Gorell Barnes, 19 Apr. 1963; 926/1881.

¹⁰¹ Int. rep., 4 Feb.-3 Mar. 1963, sec., para. 2; 926/1822/48655. The Local Intelligence Committee's report said, imprecisely, that the Emergency Powers Act was passed by the Legislative Assembly "at the end of February."

No sooner had 31st May 1964 been set by Sandys as the date for Malta's independence after the Marlborough House conference that in a meeting in St Paul's Bay Mintoff declared that: after independence the MLP would "fight in the streets" for human rights, and "then there will be no Commandos to protect them." In demanding fresh elections under UN supervision he mentioned as a precedent the UN investigation conducted in North Borneo and Sarawak.¹⁰² On another occasion Mintoff had already mentioned violence and stated that "civil war" could break out.¹⁰³

In mid-October 1963 Mintoff was toying with the idea of telling the workers that the Nationalists and the priests wanted Independence "in order to set up a Fascist dictatorship", that the MLP did not want Independence of that kind and would boycott discussions about it. He claimed that it would be easy to swing the workers against Independence just as he had swung them against Integration. He thought that the MLP and the Centre parties should co-operate on this issue and "together they could wreck the plans for Independence..."¹⁰⁴ But he seems to have thought better of it and continued to demand Independence under his conditions. A few weeks later he told a mass meeting that the MLP was prepared to fight for the human rights which they were demanding and that "what they are not given by justice they will take by force." He was reported to have told his immediate associates that "the MLP might have to take over the Government by a *coup d'état* and that the Party must be well prepared for this possibility." According to this intelligence finding,

He (Mintoff) has secured the Party's agreement to the use of 'anti-democratic' methods if Mr Sandys does not ensure

¹⁰² Int. rep., 7 Aug. - 5 Sept. 1963, sec., para. 4-5, 926/1822/48655.

¹⁰³ See above and, e.g., the editorial "Civil War Threat", *Malta News*, 24 June 1964, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Int. rep., 5 Oct.-6 Nov. 1963, sec., para. 6-7, 926/1822/48655.

that a 'democratic' Constitution is introduced. Thoughtful people do indeed fear some such attempt by Mintoff; and are apprehensive lest the Police Force is inadequate to maintain law and order.

The MLP would not be bound by any decision which Sandys reached, Mintoff said. He referred Sandys to his treatment of Dr Jagan as evidence that Sandys could not be trusted.¹⁰⁵

There was nothing very original about recourse to violence by the MLP if necessary. Not only did it feature regularly in Mintoff's parlance, it was often quoted as the sixth of the MLP's 'six points'. It was not a discovery by a British secret agent. In other words, it was the party's official policy, openly and publicly. As such, it was camouflaged in vagueness, it could mean anything: it could be elastic enough to include a *coup d'état* if Mintoff felt that was the course to pursue and found enough support for it, perhaps as a 'fall-back' position. It could even be loosely interpreted as legitimate self-defence against moral abuse. Choice of language was a message in itself, however. Pertinent to this scenario was the fact that (as to a far larger extent had been the case in 1919) there were some signs of dissatisfaction in the police force towards the end of 1963. A number of constables and sergeants were complaining of long hours of work and split duties without overtime pay. The Commissioner of Police, who was a bachelor, was seen as somewhat detached from the problems of married men with family. Dissatisfaction among senior officers seemed to arise from a belief that the Commissioner was unduly remote. There had also been a delay in filling vacancies.¹⁰⁶ As events would show, however, Commissioner De Gray was a 'no nonsense' officer and he very largely commanded the respect of the police force, though certainly not of the MLP, having defied Mintoff's orders to hold back in 1958.

¹⁰⁵ Int. rep., 6 Nov.-5 Dec. 1963, sec., f. 3, para.7-8, 926/1822/48655.

¹⁰⁶ Int. rep., 6 Nov.-5 Dec. 1963, sec., para. 16, 926/1822/48655.

Mintoff ended a letter to Sandys dated 26th December 1963 with a threat that if the human rights demanded by the MLP were not gained through "peaceful representations", they would be "sorely tempted to adopt other methods." He made it clear to his MLP associates that by "other methods" he meant violence. At least one leading MLP member was against any threat of violence and urged that the whole matter should be brought to the attention of the UN. Mintoff angrily rejected this, mainly on the grounds that "they could only expect the U.N. to intervene in Malta after violence had occurred." Mintoff urged that action should be taken as soon as the situation was ripe for it. On a vote being taken, Mintoff's reference to "other methods" was unanimously approved. It was decided that an Action Committee should be set up to plan for such "other methods" as might be necessary. This was to consist of three volunteers from among the party leaders.

Attard Kingswell attended this discussion and was asked whether the GWU would support this threat of violence. He said that as a party member he was in favour of it, but added that he could not commit the GWU without first discussing it with them. He subsequently reported to the GWU that he had been asked to associate the union with a letter from the MLP to the Secretary of State, in which a threat was made that unless the MLP's demands were met, the Maltese people would have no other choice but to take "the necessary action." He said that he had been unable to endorse this threatening letter on behalf of the GWU because of insufficient time having been given to them to consider it, and because it might lead the GWU into legal trouble as it implied "unlawful action for a political purpose." He said that he had told the MLP that when the time came for GWU assistance in any action, he would seek the union's support, subject to its legal position in the matter and provided that details were given of the action proposed. There was no "official" discussion within the GWU on the line taken by Kingswell. In "unofficial" discussion, members had noted Kingswell's caution, but they also noted that the way had been left open for the GWU to be associated with any action that the MLP may take. There were strong doubts as to whether many GWU members would be willing to become involved in violent action. It was generally felt that workers were not

in a mood for serious trouble and bloodshed, unless they were very much provoked. Apart from a few hotheads, mainly youths, those who were still employed were very anxious not to compromise themselves in any way.¹⁰⁷

Several deep-rooted GWU members, led by Indri Cilia, Secretary of the Port and Industry Section, and a leading founder-member of the GWU in 1943, took a stand against supporting the MLP in its intended recourse to violence.¹⁰⁸ The GWU General Council therefore wrote to the MLP executive purportedly to ask for a clarification of Mintoff's intentions.¹⁰⁹ Attard Kingswell almost certainly sided with (and may have been behind) Indri Cilia, a humane, highly-respected trade union orator.

Attard Kingswell, a dockyard ship fitter from Senglea, had served as the MLP's general secretary from 1949 to 1952, and twice contested general elections as an MLP parliamentary candidate in the early 1950s. He was thus on Mintoff's side in the heyday of the acrimonious Mintoff-Boffa party split, when divided loyalties led to considerable 'blood-letting'. He became general secretary of the GWU in the turbulent but seminal year 1958. With such pedigree, Attard Kingswell, Cilia and other GWU stalwarts exercised a moderating influence on the union and prevented it from being swallowed whole by Mintoff's demagogic theatrics and power drive. The GWU was primarily a trade union, however pro-Labour it pronounced and showed itself to be, and however great were the party pressures on its leadership. In the ultimate analysis, the GWU had to evaluate what was in the best interest of its members (hundreds of its paid-up workers actually supported the Nationalist Party), and of the country. Were would a bloody fight in the streets

¹⁰⁷ Annex, int. rep., 6 Dec. 1963 - 6 Jan. 1964, sec., f. 1, para. 1-2, 926/1823/48655.

¹⁰⁸ Others GWU figures who joined ranks against MLP violence were Salvu Privitera and George Pace.

¹⁰⁹ Int. rep., 6 Jan. - 7 Feb. 1964, sec., ff. 1-2, 926/1823/48655.

have left Malta's already hard-pressed socio-economic situation?¹¹⁰ In an interview with this writer many years later, Attard Kingswell described Mintoff as a spoiler (*jew jilghab jew ihassar*), but also as "the greatest fighter for Independence" (*l-akbar gellied għall-Indipendenza*).¹¹¹

Among those who were seriously concerned about internal security after independence was Archbishop Gonzi. Events in Cyprus and East Africa were exploited by those opposed to Independence especially the Strickland press, to support their opposition to early Independence, with particular emphasis on internal security. On his part, Archbishop Gonzi was said to lose no opportunity of emphasising, when he could catch an important British ear,

that it is vital that British troops shall be available to a Malta Government after Independence, to assist in preserving law and order - and the Archbishop makes it clear that he means British troops intervening to oppose any attempts by the MLP to provoke violence or seize power by unconstitutional means.

Gonzi stressed this argument to Sir Thomas Pike, an R.A.F. Marshal and the deputy at SACEUR, as well as to the Under-Secretary of State for War, when they visited Malta.¹¹² Once again, this Gonzi stand could be dated back to the mid-1950s. In 1956 he had reportedly told Eugene Melville, an assistant under secretary of state at the C.O., that peace could be kept in Malta "with two machine

¹¹⁰ Some years later, after Independence, Mintoff would out-manoevure Attard Kingswell in the GWU's national executive through his famous character assassination campaign "*min ghajja jwarra*" (he who tired clears out); and later, when in power, he had the G.W.U. 'amalgamated' with the M.L.P. After 1987, Attard Kingswell became special advisor on the dockyard to a Nationalist prime minister.

¹¹¹ Attard Kingswell/Frendo interview, Auberge de Castille, Valletta, 1 June 1989.

¹¹² Int. rep., 6 Jan.-7 Feb. 1964, sec., f. 1, para. 1, 926/1822/48655.

guns in Garrison Square"; and that the best time in Malta's history was the time of Crown Colony Government. The British Government had

given way to Mintoff's threats... Mr Mintoff had stirred up trouble and has misled and brownbeaten the British Government... who, because of a wrong analogy with Cyprus, had exaggerated fears of trouble in Malta... He would regard the removal of proportional representation as yielding to pressure from Mr Mintoff and as a further sign of partiality.¹¹³

Pellegrini, in his meeting with Lord Lansdowne in London on 24th January, warned that Mintoff intended to stage a *coup d'état* immediately after Independence, and that the MLP were supplied with sufficient weapons.¹¹⁴ Toni Pellegrini was another former general secretary of the MLP. He had resigned in February 1961 as the 'politico-religious' battle was hotting up, and set up his own Christian Workers Party. The break with Mintoff's party by one who had been its chief executive was still very fresh. Pellegrini, an information man himself, would no doubt have retained some sources of information within his former party (to which, years later, he would crawl back).

On the initiative of Governor Dorman, the Joint Consultative Council met to discuss internal security, and the future of the Royal Malta Artillery. This meeting was attended by the Commissioner of Police. Discussion showed general recognition by both the Maltese and British representatives in the Council that the police force was under-armed and under-manned, and that if sustained violence were provoked, the police force would be fully stretched in trying

¹¹³ 'Report of Discussions in Rome and Malta on Religious Assurances', 6-16 May 1956, FO 371/124260, quoted after J.M. Pirota, *Fortress Colony: The Final Act*, vol. II, 1955-1958 (Malta, 1991), p. 192.

¹¹⁴ Int. rep., 6 Jan. - 7 Febr. 1964, para. 2; sec., 926/1822/48655.

to contain mobs. It would be unable therefore to guard such key points as Cable and Wireless, and Rediffusion, and it would lack a mobile reserve. There was also general agreement that the rank and file of the R.M.A. were largely pro-Mintoff, and were therefore unreliable in an active internal security role.

Although the Prime Minister appeared to remain complacent about the threat to security after Independence, he had promised the Commissioner of Police additional funds. He had permitted the purchase of 300 revolvers from England for the police, which the R.A.F. were arranging to transport to Malta. Police instructors were being trained by the Services. To drive the point home, the police were practising anti-riot drill in a public place.¹¹⁵ Reports of the secret importation of ammunition had already been leaked to the Maltese press but in July the *Daily Telegraph* carried a news story by Anthony Mann about the arming of the Malta Police Force with rifles, and the practice of anti-riot drill. The rifles were flown into Luqa airport at night and the Force was being trained in the use of them "in case of large disturbances or an attempted insurrection". The police, who had only carried truncheons at most, were being trained in anti-riot drill with steel helmets, batons and shields. As anti-riot drill was being carried out in public, for instance at the Floriana parade ground, on purpose. Pictures of these squad exercises were carried in at least three newspapers.¹¹⁶ The Malta police reported to the Prime Minister whereas the R.M.A. came under the British defence ministry; another Maltese regiment was based in Germany serving with the British Army's overseas regiments there.

In his cable to Khrushchev, Johnson and U Thant of 7th February 1964, it was to this public anti-riot training that Mintoff was

¹¹⁵ "The significance of this has sunk in generally." Int. rep., 6 Jan.-7 Feb. 1964, para. 3, 926/1822/48655.

¹¹⁶ See e.g. 'Malta Tarma Lill-Pulizija Bl-Azzarini - L-Armi Dahlu bil-Lejl', *Il-Helsien*, 18 July 1964, p.1; 'Increased Security Training', *Times of Malta*, 3 Feb. 1964; 'Riot Drill', *Il-Helsien*, 2 Feb. 1964.



Riot squad training at the Floriana parade ground.

referring: "Police Force and British detachments have been turned into Fascist-style anti-riot squads and are training in full public view. Entreat you raise matter in Security Council before situation gets out of control."¹¹⁷

It was reported that Mintoff had sent instructions to MLP branches that young party members should join the Malta Territorial Forces. The military authorities were suspending recruiting (which in any case was no more than six men per month), giving as a reason the uncertain future of the Territorials.¹¹⁸

While Mintoff prided himself on the effect which his threats of violence were having on the growing British readiness that he sensed to give in to his demands, Dorman in his 'State of Union' message

¹¹⁷ Int. rep., 6 Jan.-7 Feb. 1964, sec., f. 4, para. 11, 926/1822/48655.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 4, 926/1822/48655.

during the Candlemas Speech in February 1964 was warning that any attempt to overthrow the constituted Government of Malta by violence would only do harm to Malta's economic and political prospects. In suggesting further that Malta's independence had to be in some way limited, Dorman implied that such limitations would be those relating to Britain for financial help and for security.¹¹⁹

More ominously, it was being reported in some detail that the promised MLP Action Committee had now been formed. It was believed to consist of Danny Cremona, Joseph Zerafa and Dr Joseph Abela,

with Mintoff controlling it from a back seat. Joseph Zerafa has been carrying out a check on the number of MLP members who own revolvers and shot guns.¹²⁰

In April it became known that, in addition to financial aid and broadcasting facilities, Nasser had offered Mintoff technical and military aid for a *coup d'état*, after Malta would have become independent. Assurances of moral support for a *coup d'état* had also been given by Poles, Tunisians and Algerians. It was reported that Nasser had suggested that a revolutionary Maltese Government formed of MLP members could live in exile, preferably in Egypt or some other North African country from which hostile propaganda and incitement to revolt could be carried on. The Egyptian Government was prepared to finance such an MLP "Government in exile."¹²¹

Such antics were not new to the likes of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, a former army officer who in 1954 had himself come to power in a

¹¹⁹ Int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 7, 2, 926/1822/48655. On this address, see above.

¹²⁰ Annex, int. rep., 7 Feb.-6 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 5, 926/1823/48655.

¹²¹ Annex, int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., para. 1 (iii), para. 2, 926/1823/48655.

coup d'état, deposing his onetime colleague and mentor General Mohammed Neguib, who had also come to power in a *coup d'état* overthrowing the monarchy in 1952. A pan-Arab visionary and a dictator in his own right, Nasser in 1964 had his United Arab Republic form joint presidency councils with Iraq and the Yemen, after earlier and still more ambitious federalist plans had failed. Nor had Nasser forgotten that in 1956, in the wake of his expropriation of the Suez Canal, a second Arab-Israeli war, and an attempted Anglo-French invasion, Malta had been partly used by British forces in mounting attacks on Egypt. A British base in Malta after independence would not have been in his interest. In the hope of obtaining benefits in return, Mintoff could obviously pluck away at that Egyptian interest, which is what he was doing.

British left-wing militants also entered the fray on behalf of the MLP. Patrick Pottle, describing himself as Secretary to Bertrand Russell, and Peter Moule, Secretary of the Committee of One Hundred in the U.K., arrived in Malta on the 28th April 1964 (the sixth anniversary of the 1958 riots). They announced that their purpose was to study the possibility of founding a committee that would organize demonstrations and civil disobedience in favour of a neutral Malta after Independence. It was believed that they had come on the MLP's invitation, and during their visit they were looked after by the MLP League of Youth. The Maltese government was given advance notice of their probable arrival, but they decided against declaring them prohibited immigrants. Two days after their arrival, however, the Malta government obtained a court order for their expulsion, and they were deported on 1st May.¹²² Interestingly, the Labour League of Youth later issued a denial that there was any truth in a statement made by the government that Pottle and Moule, of the Committee of 100, who were in Malta from 28th April to 1st May, had come at the invitation of the L.L.Y. However, from secret sources it was known that their visit was arranged by leading members of the MLP. It was hard to see why the L.L.Y. should be

¹²² Int. rep., 8 Apr.-6 May 1964, sec., ff. 6-7, para. 12, 926/1822/48655.

at such pains to deny responsibility for their visit, particularly in view of the fact that they were looked after in Malta by Patrick Holland, President of the L.L.Y. Following the visit of these radicals, it was reliably reported that efforts were being made by certain active members of the MLP to form a branch of the Committee of 100 in Malta.¹²³

The Egyptian connection was not an isolated affair; it has to be read together with other goings-on - not to say plots - unfolding with Algeria; and on a somewhat more political-diplomatic front, with the U.S.S.R. All these dealings, with their presumed ideological leanings, were hardly the stuff of which a democratic party's international relations consisted in any routine sense: they bore directly or indirectly on Malta's defence and internal security in the event of an anticipated historic turning-point in her destiny.¹²⁴

The MLP leaders were considering whether to organise some form of underground movement to operate either in the event of a lengthy postponement of Independence, or of the Constitution as proposed by the Nationalists being brought into force. It was reported that there was a strong body of opinion in the MLP hierarchy in favour of the formation of an underground movement but no formal decision had been made about it. Mintooff expressed himself as being in favour but advised that secrecy was of the utmost importance and said that it should be left entirely in his hands to initiate plans for it. He gave instructions for certain rearrangements to be made in the MLP "in order to achieve greater efficiency and secrecy" and to deal with the party's growing overseas interests.

A commission was set up in June to prepare a draft plan for this reorganisation. It was likely that a 'Foreign Affairs Department' would be established consisting of four branches dealing with

¹²³ Int. rep., 7 May-4 June, sec., para. 20, 926/1822/48655.

¹²⁴ On Algerian, Russian and Egyptian contacts, see esp. above, pp. 438-455 and p. 469 *sq.*

AAPSO, the Socialist International, the U.S.S.R., trade and commerce. It was also expected that a 'Personnel Section' would be set up "to deal with secret reports on the activities of Party members." Tarcisio Ellul, a young party member who had recently returned from studies of the cooperative movement and of German in Germany, was appointed as full-time Administrative Secretary. A small 'Bureau' was to be set up to help Mintoff settle matters of particular urgency and importance. Once this was established, the national executive would probably meet only once a month and the general conference every three months. "A time is now approaching", said Mintoff, "when the Party should act swiftly and in all secrecy."¹²⁵

On returning from his official visit to the U.S.S.R. in June, Mintoff again threatened violence. He warned that the MLP should be on their guard against a settlement between Sandys and Borg Olivier which would contain only a token number of concessions to the MLP's constitutional demands; these concessions would be small in extent, and Borg Olivier would be permitted to undo them as soon as Independence had been obtained. "If this happens", Mintoff was reported as saying, "we shall say to Mr Sandys that in Malta there will be bloodshed and for this he will be to blame. We do not want any dictatorship, neither red nor black. We are ready to bring arms from abroad and to arm the people... the party must perforce find its allies from abroad."¹²⁶

Since Mintoff's "bloodshed" speech on 21st June, a number of MLP members were reported to have approached the party's general secretary, Joe Zerafa, "asking him for arms to be used against the police." Within the party, plans were afoot to call a major demonstration but extremist and moderate factions were arguing about what form that should take. Mintoff was reported to have

¹²⁵ Annex, int. rep., 7 May-4 June 1964, sec., para. 3-4, 926/1823/48655.

¹²⁶ Int. rep., 5 June 1964 - 3 July 1964, sec., para. 4, 926/1822/48655.

¹²⁷ Annex, int. rep., 5 June - 3 July 1964, sec., para. 1-3, 926/1823/48655.

arms and ammunition had been landed and handled by policemen at Luqa airport. Later the stuff was delivered at an undisclosed address, it announced.¹²⁸ A Labour MP, Notary Joseph Abela, who formed part of the Action Committee, told an MLP meeting that on 23rd April four policemen, two of them in plain clothes, had unloaded crates of ammunition onto a police Bedford truck from Luqa airfield. A few weeks later there was another report of ammunition on board another plane which landed at Luqa airfield at 0345 hours.¹²⁹ Police Commissioner de Gray would neither deny nor confirm that his Force was “being armed.” Nor had any statement been forthcoming from Government. As in many other things, the editorial added, the public was once again being left in the dark. It was all “very dangerous.” The public had a right to know who was ordering what, by whom, and for what purpose. It was all the more dangerous to leave the public uninformed of what exactly was going on, when “these arms and ammunition are imported to wound and even kill if needs be.” The editorial, entitled “Fools are warned”, then continued as follows:

Let there be provision for internal security by all means. But one hopes and prays that armed security men will not be used instead to silence the voice of the advocates and champions of human rights.

Let's get this straight: the Maltese Workers' Movement NEVER took blows lying down. This very strong and powerful Movement would not hesitate for one minute to take up arms in self-defence.

April 28th, 1958 was still too fresh to be forgotten by anyone getting trigger-happy. On that day, an unarmed Workers' Movement “just thrown out of Government by the foreigner, made a token coup in

¹²⁸ Other news reports of the same ilk appeared in February and in July 1964.

¹²⁹ ‘Ajruplan Igħib Munizzjon għall-Pulizija’, *l-orizzont*, 16 May 1964.

defence of the people's rights", the paper held, adding, in bold capital letters:

THAT DAY SHOULD SERVE AS A STARK REMINDER
TO POTENTIAL BLOOD-SPILLERS BENT ON
TURNING THESE ISLANDS INTO A FASCIST STATE
RULED AT GUN-POINT.

The Maltese Workers' Movement was all out for peace, law and order. But it was only the embodiment of human rights in the new Constitution which could guarantee them. The editorial then concluded with some quite unrestrained words of "warning", which could be read as threatening if not as inciting - and which seemed to confirm reports that the MLP's 'arsenal' was indeed well stocked. Here was a warning, it said:

Any attempts to deprive our people of such rights by the law of the gun will be answered by the gun. For every single round fired to suppress legitimate clamour, there will be ten rounds fired to silence the suppressor. FOOLS ARE WARNED.¹³⁰

In early July the anti-Mintoff daily *Il-Haddiem* (The Worker) carried a lead story claiming that a suicide squad had been formed within the MLP during a meeting behind closed doors following Mintoff's return from Russia. The paper's 'Labour Correspondent' said that his main purpose in disclosing this new development was to make things clear to the authorities, so that there would be no repetition of the disturbances seen in 1958. The Maltese workers, he said, truly believed in Malta first and foremost: for them Malta came before Mintoff.¹³¹

¹³⁰ *Malta News*, 20 May 1964, enc. 926/2076.

¹³¹ 'Ġiet iffurmata F'MALTA Skwadra tas-Suwiċidju - Wara l-Mawra ta' Mintoff fir-Russja', *Il-Haddiem*, 3 July 1964, p.1, p.8.

Such discourse further confirmed the British in the tabs they had been keeping, in their strong suspicion that a *coup d'état* in Malta was indeed in the offing. A so-called "Coup paper" detailed the relevant scenarios in anticipation of it. On this, a "Civil Internal Security Plan" was based. A draft of it was forwarded to the Commissioner of Police by Major-General J. D. Frost already in April 1964. One paragraph indicated as '26A' has survived in the records, as an extract to what were clearly top secret 'Internal Security' papers. This shows that a British Defence Committee (Malta) had been meeting many times to consider the available intelligence and to ensure that operational responses were devised, at the ready. According to minute 4 of this committee's twenty-third meeting, Army reconnaissances were being carried out of Rediffusion House and the Central Telephone Exchange: "as a result of which plans would be prepared for the protection of both." The Committee "took note" of this state of affairs.¹³² While the British had a direct interest in defending installations, which were directly British or British-related, they could not have been acting to the exclusion of Maltese security interests. On the contrary, internal evidence from the scanty documentation at hand suggests that they were sharing intelligence with at least the top man in the Malta police force, and to some extent working jointly out of mutual interest. The "Commissioner of Police" referred to by Major-General Frost was the Malta one, de Gray.

These deductions may be confirmed from a secret paper on internal security, submitted by Sir Maurice Dorman to a meeting of Malta's Consultative Council held at the palace, Valletta, in early 1964. Those present for this meeting included Borg Olivier and Felice

¹³² 'Extract from British Defence Committee Malta (26A)', dated 14 April 1964, is written in ink above the a typed paragraph which followed, and which had been glued on to an otherwise blank folio (marked 18 in ink). This was described in ink in the margin as 'Extract to "Internal Security" pps.' The relevant paragraph was (d) of what was evidently a more extensive submission, and it is marked secret, with 'secret' underlined. Enc., 926/2076. A few pages away, on a folio maked '22', similarly in hand, was attached to this batch, which was no doubt doctored, the *Malta News* editorial "Fools are warned".

from the Cabinet, the attorney general Cremona, and the administrative secretary Cuschieri. On the British side, apart from Dorman who was chairing, there was the UK Commissioner Wakefield, the C-in-C Holland-Martin, Air Vice-Marshal D. C. Mc Kinley, Air Officer Commanding R.A.F. Malta, and Brigadier B. Kingzett, General Officer Commanding Malta and Libya. In attendance was Mr V. de Gray, Commissioner of Police.

The opening paragraph of Dorman's paper set and incapsulated the scene:

In my view, and on the information I have, Malta is faced with

- I. a short term threat to law and order, and
- II. with long term problems of internal security.

These are the direct responsibility of the Malta Government, but these responsibilities cannot be discharged without help from Her Majesty's Government. What may happen affects and reflects on H.M.G. as well as on the Malta Government. There is an obvious community of interest but there is at present a risk of disunity in meeting these problems.

The nature of the short term threat could take either one or all of the following forms:

A general strike accompanied by violence in the traditional form;
 An attempt to capture key persons;
 An attempt to occupy key positions or places.

Dorman's 'coup' paper continued on these lines:

The object would be more than a demonstration; it could be a coup intended to lead to the downfall of the Government by unconstitutional means. The knowledge, the men, the ability and possibly the intention are available. If it looked

as though it was being successful, there could be a marked swing of popular support to the apparently winning side. Public opinion, experience and common sense require that this threat should now be taken seriously.

Timing, intelligence, forces available and deficiencies were then examined in turn.

The first occasion on which a serious build-up might begin was after the announcement of decisions on the Constitution, but it was more likely that trouble would arise "immediately before or immediately after Independence..." A general warning ought to be available particularly in the case of trouble starting with a strike, but "a sudden attempt on key persons and key positions could be launched without much warning."

The Malta Government, which was directly responsible, had only the Malta Police available - total strength under 1,200. They were fully stretched on normal police duties, they could not undertake static guard duties nor handle groups using firearms. They would find it difficult to maintain full efficiency over a period lasting a week. They could not contain planned violence on a major scale "without help". UK Forces, if available, included the R.M.A., D.E.R.R., Royal Sussex, R.N. and R.A.F., and were ample for support of the Malta police and the restoration of law and order if necessary.

However, there were a number of deficiencies. Since the introduction of the new Constitution and with the imminence of Independence, there had been a complete change in responsibilities for internal security that had not been fully appreciated. Whereas in the past the initiative and responsibility lay primarily with the Governor and the Fortress Commander or General Officer Commanding, now it lay with the Prime Minister and the Commissioner of Police. The UK Forces were responsible for their own security and to come to the Government's aid if asked.

Due to difficulties over indemnification, UK Forces were not immediately available to the Malta Government. No Malta

Government Plan had been drawn up for dealing with internal security. The ideas of a *coup*, capturing key persons or occupying key installations, required "radical new thinking". The plans of UK Forces now provided primarily for the security of H.M.G.'s installations and for holding themselves available to come to the aid of the civil government if asked and if approved; but they contained no provisions for safeguarding civilian personnel or installations or for restoring them if occupied. The Police Force, in its new role, was not strong enough in numbers, weapons and equipment, communications or transport. In other words, noted Dorman,

if serious civil commotion broke out tomorrow, we should be unprepared in vital respects and there might well be muddle and delay in handling it. If I exaggerate I hope that this will be shown to me. If I do not exaggerate, then means must be found of putting internal security on a stronger and sounder basis.

A government or a people faced with threats could only meet them with strength and confidence if it had measured the worst, made plans to meet it, and was satisfied that it had available the means to do so:

I believe, within reason, in being prepared for the worst, letting others see that you are - then the worst does not happen.

In the longer term, with the approach of Independence, the British government would wish to consider the future of the Royal Malta Artillery and the Territorial Regiments, both of which so far formed part of the British Army. The future of other Maltese in the UK Armed Forces also had to be considered.¹³³

¹³³ First raised in 1800 to man Malta's coastal defences, the R.M.A. had more recently manned the anti-aircraft defences. In 1964 it consisted of two regiments supported by a HQ, a depot, training establishment and a band. There were 20 officers and 430 other ranks in B.A.O.R., and 50 officers and 370 other ranks in Malta, a total

One of the recommendations made by the Governor was that a small *ad hoc* committee of military and police officers be set up "to draw up a civil internal security plan", to be approved by the Prime Minister after consultation with the Consultative Council if necessary. Others were that a decision be taken concerning police requirements, that one Minister would be responsible informally to the Prime Minister for urgent actions on these issues, and to see that the British Government be "fully aware of the serious and urgent nature of these problems and the proposed solutions."¹³⁴

In the ensuing discussions, Dorman stressed that recent events in other parts of the Commonwealth had shown that possibilities of a *coup* could not be dismissed lightly. Wakefield noted that after independence if a *coup* took place and was successfully accomplished, Her Majesty's Government could not intervene. In Zanzibar no attempt had been made to restore the position. Dorman and Borg Olivier thought that in Malta there should be nothing to stop a prime minister, who felt his government threatened with removal by illegal, subversive or revolutionary means, from making arrangements with H.M.G. to assist him in safeguarding his position if he so wished. Wakefield agreed that if assistance were sought before a *coup* had taken place, it could be given. But he re-emphasized that in face of a *coup accompli* British Forces could not

of 70 officers and 800 other ranks. Its first regiment had been converted into a transport unit and was stationed in B.A.O.R.; it was likely to be required until April 1965. Short service soldiers on a 3 year engagement did a 2½ year tour in Germany, the N.C.O.'s being found from the personnel of the R.M.A. who served a circle of one year in Malta and two years in Germany. So long as the first regiment was in Germany, the second regiment was required in Malta. The Territorials were a volunteer force, comprising two light anti-aircraft regiments (the 3rd and 11th), and one infantry unit (The King's Own Malta Regiment). In 1964 the Maltese Territorial Force had 78 officers and 1,426 other ranks. There were also 7 regular officers and 25 regular other ranks on the permanent staff. They had no military role in U.K. plans.

¹³⁴ 'Internal Security - Note by the Governor', sec., paper no. CC.5(G.1), enc. Minutes of the 4th meeting, Consultative Council, Malta, 27 Jan. 1964, sec., OPM/535/62, OPM Arch., Castille.

intervene. Holland-Martin was also of this view, pointing out that in the draft Defence Agreement there was no provision for the use of H.M. Forces in such a contingency.

If a *coup* were attempted, the Council concluded that the most likely targets for seizure would be among others the Prime Minister and Ministers, and the Commissioner of Police. De Gray said that advance warning concerning capture of key persons would be possible but much depended on the number of people who knew the plans. He did not feel it was necessary at the present moment to provide armed plain clothes escorts to Ministers. Trouble before independence was more likely to take the shape of strikes, demonstrations or general civil disturbance. Immediately after Independence, the Council agreed, was the time when a *coup* was most likely. While a general intention to attempt a *coup* might be known, it would probably be difficult to establish the exact date of any such attempt. This would create problems for the police - the plan could be kept simmering waiting a good opportunity, but it was not easy to maintain counter-measures over a long period.

In reply to Borg Olivier's enquiries regarding the present intelligence machinery in Malta, Dorman stated that it was usual for a government to have a special branch in the Police whose main aim was to watch for subversive activities. A link-up normally existed between the various special branches in the Commonwealth through liaison officers. The duty of the local organization would be to seek to collect information and advise the Prime Minister of any "dangerous situations". Dorman regarded such an organization as "a vital one." The Heads of the Services agreed with him that "an intelligence service" was essential. De Gray said that he had a small intelligence set-up but it was badly hampered by lack of funds. He had no funds for normal intelligence work. The Prime Minister agreed that the necessary funds should be put at the disposal of the Commissioner.

As to Forces, the C-in-C said that in any situation where there was widespread sabotage of Service installations or British lives were endangered, UK Forces available at present were "not sufficient."



Police Commissioner Vivian de Gray, seen here in mess dress.

It might also be the case that "a successful coup" were accompanied or followed by "general rioting" when British Forces would be required to protect first UK citizens and British property. De Gray was confident that the police would be capable of dealing with all ordinary violence and rioting, as in the past, provided that they did not have to undertake guard duties at static points. "They relied on the military forces to take care of this." However, no such forces were available for these duties. After Independence, the situation would be covered by the Defence Agreement or Visiting Forces legislation.

There was disagreement as to whether British forces were at all obliged to respond to an official Maltese call for assistance. Professor Cremona maintained that under the laws of Malta the Services were bound to go to the assistance of the police, if called. This view, he said, was contained in two memoranda drawn up at different times by British legal advisers to the Governor during periods of colonial administration. The UK Commissioner pointed out that "this view was not now agreed to by other British legal advisers." The Courts had never decided it and; if anything, it was a question of interpretation. As matters stood, H.M.G. "could not make U.K. Forces available." The General Officer Commanding explained that prior to the present constitution (that of 1961 as amended in 1962), the Governor was responsible for calling out the troops and he was consequently regarded as responsible for indemnification. The position was different now.

Dr Borg Olivier felt that safety could be ensured as before, that is as had been the case over so many years and without the need of indemnification. The grant of extra powers to the police and the Services, he added, would not receive popular support. His view was that the presence of British Forces in the Island was enough to ensure order, and that no incidents which could not be contained were likely to occur between now and Independence. Professor Cremona reiterated his views adding that the Maltese Government was being put "in an unfair position." Nothing had changed in the law. It was quite inconceivable, for obvious reasons, that the Maltese Government would open Court proceedings against H.M.G. Admiral Holland-Martin suggested that the necessary legislation

should be drafted and kept ready in case the question of help from the Services arose. It was of vital importance that the legal argument be resolved, Governor Dorman concluded. Legislation in parliament, he agreed, would be difficult and undesirable, but it was possible and usual to draft an emergency regulation which would only be published or come into effect on the declaration of a state of emergency. The Prime Minister asked for time to consult his Cabinet colleagues, adding that any planning between now and Independence Day should assume that British Forces and the R.M.A. would be available.

The Council then discussed "The Internal Security Plan". In Dorman's view, the the Services plan for internal security provided only for Service establishments, there was an area of responsibility which had not been covered by any arrangements. There ought to be a Civil Government plan for dealing with the various risks under consideration, "indicating what action had to be taken and who was to be responsible." This should cover the maintenance of essential supplies, the protection of key or vulnerable points, the provision of safe communications, the site of government and of the control centre. All who needed to know in the Government or the Services should have a copy of such a plan. Holland-Martin agreed that there should be co-ordinated planning and suggested that the fewer the number of people involved in the preparation of the plan the better. Discussions should be undertaken between the G.O.C. and the Police Commissioner at this stage. The plan should be based on three eventualities, the C-in-C held, as follows:

1. Use of Malta Police alone;
2. Malta Police supported by the R.M.A.;
3. Malta Police supported by both the R.M.A. and U.K. Armed Forces.

In the case of 1 before Independence and in the case of 1 and 2 after independence, no difficulties would arise, as the Prime Minister would be responsible for general policy and control. However, if it

came to the use of British troops as at 3, then command and control of all internal security forces, including the police, would pass into the hands of the G.O.C. At stages 1 and 2 after Independence, the Commissioner of Police would decide what was required from the G.O.C., at stage 3, the G.O.C. would be responsible but would consult the Police Commissioner. The Prime Minister agreed that it might be useful if the G.O.C. could have a talk with him or the Cabinet about internal security. In the meantime, the Police Commissioner, with assistance from the G.O.C., would put in hand the preparation of a Malta Government Internal Security plan.¹³⁵

By 7th July 1964 the detailed and specific internal security reinforcement plans for Malta, in the event of an attempted *coup d'état* or a breakdown of law and order, were finalized and approved. These plans were essentially those laid down in an informed special paper by the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, Admiral Holland-Martin; they were then examined by the chiefs of staff and forwarded with their recommendations to the Secretary of State for Defence. The general plan referred back to earlier meetings held in 1962 and in 1963. As a result of various changes a revised plan, known as 'Operation Competent', had come into effect on 23rd March 1964. 'Operation Competent' now provided for the reinforcement of Malta from the UK by one infantry battalion, one field squadron R.A.F. Regiment, and a "psychological operations staff and unit." An earlier contingency survey in April 1963 had stated a requirement of eight infantry battalions in the worst case. This report had been overtaken by events because of consultation with the UK Commissioner in Malta and because of subsequent developments in the negotiations for independence. The revised assessment in July 1964 of the internal security threat up to mid-1965 was on the basis of a fresh appreciation of the forces required which Holland-Martin had been asked draw up two months earlier.

¹³⁵ See the minutes of the fourth meeting of the Consultative Council on 27 Jan. 1964, OPM/535/62, ff. 1-10, signed by E. Firman, secretary to the Council, OPM Arch. Castille. Other matters were discussed at some length, particularly about the R.M.A.'s role.

The Holland-Martin plan first set out in 22 paragraphs the various factors affecting the threat to internal security and made the following points:

1. It was difficult to foresee any constitution which would not offend a large section of the population;
2. Mintoff had spoken openly of violence "and of gaining power by unconstitutional methods if necessary". He could "call on a nucleus of some 55 members of the Malta Labour Party, supported by a hooligan element which is becoming increasingly unemployed";
3. There was no shortage of sporting guns and explosives in the island;
4. The civil dockyard area would be the likely centre of any industrial trouble;
5. The 1,200-strong police force could be expected to operate loyally and with reasonable efficiency under the present Commissioner in the initial stages of an internal security situation, but its efficiency might deteriorate after about a week's engagement and would probably be drastically impaired without the present Commissioner. De Gray was unlikely to remain in power should the M.L.P. come to power;
6. The 380-strong Admiralty Constabulary would generally remain loyal but would not be available in any strength for internal security duties outside the Admiralty installations;
7. The dispersion of Service installations and families and the intermixing of Service and civilian interests greatly increased the vulnerability of both installations and families.

Five internal situations were envisaged:

Situation A: Disorderly political demonstrations and rallies;

Situation B: Industrial action probably centred in dockyard areas, disturbances in the highly-populated Three Cities area south-east of Grand Harbour, and island-wide strikes of up to about one week's duration;

Situation C: Situation B extending to Valletta and to the risk of malicious damage to Service installations and threats to Servicemen in the area affected;

Situation D: Situation C but with continuous and sustained disturbances in the Three Cities/Valletta areas, outbreaks in adjacent villages, scattered attacks on Service installations throughout the island probably involving explosives, and probably some attacks on Servicemen and some intimidation of Service families;

Situation E: An attempted *coup d'état* by the Malta Labour Party after Independence involving rapid action by night of a small body of armed resolute men.

As for force requirements, the plan had a five-point policy action programme. First, the aim would be to safeguard defence interests to allow the Services to fulfil their operational tasks; and to assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order. Second, the use of force should as far as possible be left to the Malta Police and Admiralty Constabulary; initially, troops should be employed in relieving the police on key points. Third, the safeguarding of the more important key points would be based on: maximum use of guard dogs; guards on high priority key points; the use of Servicemen as watchmen; small centre mobile reserves; and mobile patrols. Fourth, Service and U.K.-based families would be safeguarded by military police mobile patrols and a home guard organisation employing heads of families in the areas where families live, together with the routing of key point mobile patrols through these areas. Fifth, the early deployment of adequate

psychological operations support to gain full effect from the use of security forces.

The chiefs of staff considered five main operational possibilities in the assessment of the working of this five-pronged action, on the assumption that members of the Royal Malta Artillery, although some of them were trained in riot control, would not open fire on their own kith and kin. If the Malta Police contained Situation A, that would be it. In Situation B, one infantry company with some specialist support to maintain essential services would be required. For Situation C, one infantry battalion plus 480 men, i.e. approximately one battallion, would be needed, together with 64 guard dogs and handlers for key point guards. The psychological operations staff and unit would be deployed. In Situation D, the following forces would swing into action: the 'Ferrets' squadron armoured reconnaissance regiment; two infantry battalions, plus 780 men (including a third infantry battalion and one field squadron RAF Regiment); plus 82 guard dogs and handlers for key point guards and assistance to the police; together with the psychological staff and unit, and one flight of helicopters. As for Situation E, the current military garrison would be fully deployed. In the unlikely event of a general strike taking place as part of any of the situations and lasting more than a week, there would be a requirement additional to the forces listed in order to replace local essential labour, particularly for the Royal Air Force.

The forces already available in Malta as of July 1964 for internal security duties belonged mainly to the Army Garrison. This comprised two infantry battalions, one of 630 all ranks, the other of 375 all ranks; 350 Maltese in the R.M.A.; the R.E. Fortress Squadron of 170 Maltese with U.K. officers; with twelve guard dogs and handlers. In addition, there were the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. These had personnel to provide static guards and patrols on a limited scale for the first 48 hours only. They also had 20 guard dogs and handlers.

As for the reinforcements required for situations C and D, it was recommended that the psychological operations staff and unit

should be established in Malta immediately, and that some of the 50 additional guard dogs required some should be made available immediately to work with handlers provided by the garrison.

The chiefs of staff were advised that the UK would not accept a positive commitment for maintaining peace in Malta after independence:

We would, however, almost certainly intervene in the event of an attempted *coup d'état* by Mintoff. In the case of lesser, through serious, disturbances we would probably accede to a request by the Maltese Government to provide troops in support of the civil power.

These commitments would not be embodied in a formal agreement although it was intended that the necessary prerequisites for our forces, including indemnity, would be laid down by exchange of letters in advance of independence. After independence, in the absence of a request by the Maltese Government to provide military assistance, we shall only be entitled to defend British lives and property:

Although we are advised that it is unlikely that a friendly Maltese Government would refrain from asking for our help, it must be recognised that, even without such a request by the Maltese Government, military intervention on a scale necessary to safeguard the operational viability of our installations might have to be undertaken. This would have widespread political repercussions.

The chiefs of staff therefore agreed with the five possible situations postulated and with the need to be able to counter such situations "before and after independence." They then went into considerable detail outlining the specifics of the operations that would have to be resorted to in case of serious trouble, thus giving the 'go ahead' almost in all respects to Operation Competent. While agreeing that a "Ferret" squadron was particularly suitable for the task envisaged, this was to be provided by the armoured reconnaissance regiment

SECRET

UK EYES ONLYANNEX TC CCS 202/G4
(Continued)

b. Mintoff, the Leader of the Malta Labour Party, has spoken openly of violence and of gaining power by unconstitutional methods if necessary. He could call on a nucleus of some 55 members of the Malta Labour Party, supported by a hooligan element which is becoming increasingly unemployed.

c. There is no shortage of sporting guns and explosives in the island.

d. The civil dockyard area would be the likely centre of any industrial trouble.

e. The police force (1200 Maltese all ranks) could be expected to operate loyally and with reasonable efficiency under the present Commissioner in the initial stages of an internal security situation, but its efficiency might deteriorate after about a week's engagement and would probably be drastically impaired without the present Commissioner. The latter is unlikely to remain in office should the Malta Labour Party come to power.

f. The Admiralty Constabulary (about 360) would generally remain loyal but would not be available in any strength for internal security duties outside the Admiralty installations.

g. The dispersion of Service installations and families and the intermixing of Service and civilian interests greatly increases the vulnerability of both installations and families.

6. The following internal security situations are envisaged:

Situation A - Disorderly political demonstrations and rallies.

Situation B - Industrial action probably centred in the dockyard areas, disturbance in the Three Cities area (the highly populated area south-east of Grand Harbour), and island-wide strikes of up to about one week's duration.

Situation C - As for situation B but extending to Valletta and to the risk of malicious damage to Service installations and threats to Servicemen in the area affected.

- 2 -

Excerpts from a document submitted by the C-in-C, Mediterranean, on the internal security reinforcement of Malta, which was discussed by the Defence Chiefs of Staff during their meeting of 8th July 1964. According to this information, if a *coup* were staged Mintoff could count on a hard-core nucleus of 55 armed party supporters, apart from several hooligans. I.S. Instruction 1963 foresaw "a surprise move", about 4 to 8 weeks after Independence, "to overthrow the Government and for the

SECRET

HK EYES ONLY

ANNEX TO CDB 202/64
(Continued)

Situation D - As for situation C but with continuous and sustained disturbances in the Three Cities/Valetta areas, outbreaks in adjacent villages, scattered attacks on Service installations throughout the island probably involving explosives, and probably some attacks on Servicemen and some intimidation of Service families.

Situation E - An attempted coup d'état by the Malta Labour Party after Independence involving rapid action by night of a small body of armed resolute men.

Force Requirements

7. Policy. The force requirements are based on the following policy for the use of security forces:

- a. The aim would be to safeguard defence interests to allow the Services to fulfill their operational tasks; and to assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order.
- b. The use of force should, as far as possible, be left to the Malta Police and Admiralty Constabulary and, initially, troops should therefore be employed in relieving the police on key points.
- c. Some calculated risk to the less important key points must be accepted, and in general their safeguarding would be based on:
 - (1) Maximum use of guard dogs.
 - (2) Guards on high priority key points.
 - (3) The use of Servicemen as watchmen.
 - (4) Small central mobile reserves.
 - (5) Mobile patrols.
- d. Service and United Kingdom-based families would be safeguarded by military police mobile patrols and a home guard organisation employing heads of families in the areas where families live, together with the routing of key point mobile patrols through these areas.
- e. The early deployment of adequate psychological operations support to gain full effect from the use of security forces.

8. Assessment. Based on the foregoing policy, and the probability that the regular Royal Malta Artillery, although a proportion are trained in riot control, would not open fire on

- 3 -

MLP to take over". VIPs would be surrounded, key points cut off and insurgents assemble in Hamrun, Paola, Cospicua and Żabbar. I.S. HQ would move from Police Depot to Castille if a request for military assistance were made, and all roads to Valletta would be blocked. An alternative venue should be selected for Cabinet as it could not assemble in the P.M.'s office. (Enc., Frost/Dorman, 7 July 1964, sec., Dorman/Frost, 30 June 1964, sec., 'Internal Security', NAM ser. 4/64.)

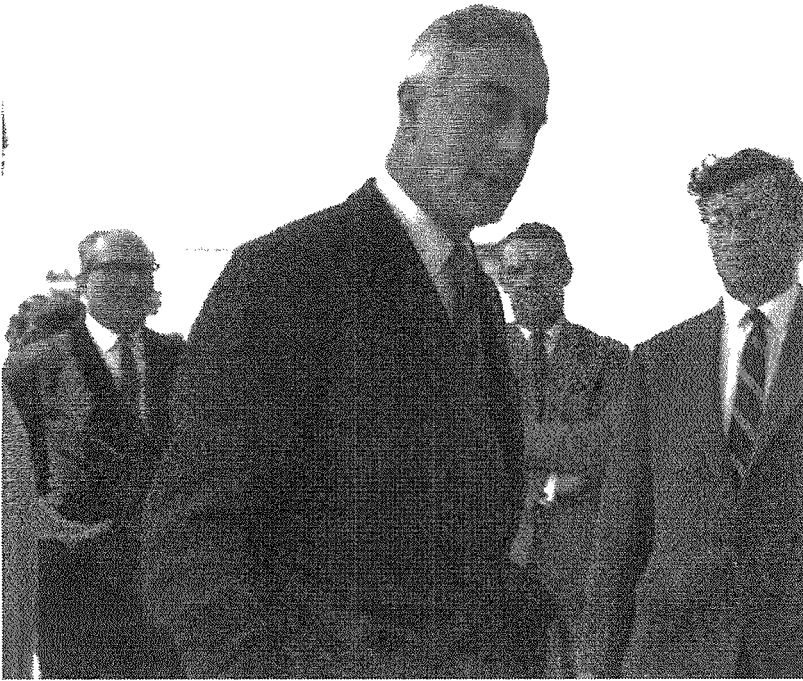
in Libya. The best helicopters for Malta's topography would be SRTs, acting together with the Army Air Corps flight of helicopters. Guard dogs would have to be provided with their own handlers so their provision would depend on availability at the time. Some more detailed contingency plans were requested in the unlikely event of a prolonged general strike, particularly for the replacement of local skilled labour. As to Intelligence, it was concluded that:

To assist Dr Borg Olivier in countering subversion we should give him as much information as possible on treasonable activities by his opponents. It is also in our own interests to give him every encouragement and assistance in building up the Special Branch of the Malta Police Force.

Military intervention on a scale necessary to safeguard the operational viability of British installations might have to be taken without a Maltese Government request for assistance, for example in the event of a *coup d'état*.

In a separate set of recommendations to the Minister for Defence to be forwarded to him by Mountbatten, Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chiefs of Staff Committee invited the Army Department in consultation with the Air Force Department to investigate the best method of providing guard dogs and their handlers. They invited the Army Department to investigate the best method of providing a psychological operations staff for Malta. They instructed the Commanders-in-Chief Committee (West of Suez) to revise Plan Competent on the basis of Holland-Martin's paper, taking their views into account. And finally, as already mentioned, they invited Holland-Martin to submit a detailed estimate of the reinforcements required to replace local skilled labour in the event of a prolonged general strike, so that a separate plan to meet this contingency could be prepared by the Commanders-in-Chief Committee (West of Suez).¹³⁶

¹³⁶ See the doc., sec., UK Eyes Only, 'Internal Security Reinforcement of Malta', Annex to COS 202/64, ff. 1-8, enc. Lapsley memo., 8 July 1964, 926/2076. Air Vice-Marshall J. H. Lapsley was Secretary to the Chiefs of Staff Committee.



Earl Mountbatten during a visit to Malta in the mid-Sixties.

While these plots and counter-plots were being hatched well into the year, in London Borg Olivier and his negotiating team were trying to finalize agreements and a general settlement so that this could pass through the British parliament, before it adjourned indefinitely for the general election which was due to be held in the early Autumn. However, the Chiefs of Staff in the Ministry of Defence, and the Heads of Services in Malta were continuing carefully to weigh the Malta question in the light of Britain's presence and prospects if Independence were to be granted; and of the implications, for British and Western security in the Mediterranean, of some disturbing changes taking place in the region.

Second Thoughts

MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY AND THE SOUTHERN FLANK

As the date set for Independence approached some very senior defence-minded personnel and politicians began to have second thoughts about the course of action intended. The sinking feeling that Malta could be lost, just at a time when its usefulness to Britain could be increasing, led to qualms, queries and a renewed caution. This reserve had always been present in certain quarters, but some now seemed to be having cold feet. The referendum was, well, inconclusive; the main parties seemed not to be able to agree on anything except getting Independence; there were three parties who didn't want it; the Constitution as it stood was unacceptable; and Malta's democratic political future in the Western fold seemed to be seriously at risk. Had an opportunity been provided, especially in May 1964, such elements would have jumped at it, pressing perhaps successfully for a stay of execution. One such opportunity would have been large-scale industrial and political unrest with a dose of violence. That could well have served to delay matters, perhaps indefinitely, justifying a 1958/59-style reassumption of gubernatorial control for security reasons and in the public (and the British) interest.

Borg Olivier left Malta for London soon after the referendum result and he stayed there, on the spot, until July, when the clouds finally lifted.

What Britain would be willing to offer and for how long was seen to be linked to the facilities that would continue to be available to her after Malta's Independence. This was the moderate view. A more hard-line view sometimes expressed in joint meetings of the defence chiefs of staff and heads of the Services in Malta was whether Britain should let go of Malta completely, so soon, or at all, unless defence and security were assured. But how could you do that after giving Independence? The British prime minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, was not only conscious of this dilemma: he was himself wary, hoping as late as April 1964 that a way could still be found to stall the grant of independence to Malta.

The debate going on in defence and security circles was not quite on the same wavelength as that being pursued in the Colonial and Commonwealth relations offices. The former were more sceptical, concerned and worried. The latter were more liberal-minded, rather eager to bring the Malta independence question to a conclusion through a compromise constitution of some kind (with an accompanying defence *cum* finance package) before the Tory administration's own term of office ended: to settle it and to be done with it - another bead around the neck.

The head-scratching about a post-independence Defence arrangement with Malta began immediately after Dr Borg Olivier's request for Independence was made in August 1962, and it lasted right until the very end of the Anglo-Maltese negotiations in July 1964. Although these negotiations were kept under lock and key, by November 1962 Borg Olivier had already made known to the British government what his administration sought to achieve in this domain. He did this in his embryonic memorandum of 24th November 1962, which was dignified, self-willed and far-reaching:

In principle my Government will seek to negotiate a defence agreement under which in peace time facilities are made available to British forces on broadly the same basis as at

present. Both for political and practical reasons this would not be an exclusive Agreement and Malta would reserve the right to make such other arrangements with other powers as from time to time appeared to be in her interest.

Not only would facilities be made available to Britain "in peace time", Malta would retain the right to make arrangements with "other powers" as she thought fit. In this resolute statement of intent as early as November 1962, prior to his first independence talks in London in the following month, Borg Olivier held that practically "all Service lands and buildings in these Islands" should be handed over to the Government of Malta on Independence. Subject to certain conditions, the Government of Malta would be "prepared to consider some exceptions to" this rule whereby "lands and buildings including fixed assets held by the Services on independence and required by them thereafter should be retained on lease at a nominal rent" provided that :

- (i) between now and independence no disposals of lands and buildings other than to the Government of Malta should take place;
- (ii) contracts for the holding of lands and buildings will require all War Damage of national monuments to be made good without delay; all temporary buildings and unsightly objects would be removed before land is returned when no longer required.¹

The ready presumption of Maltese sovereignty clearly evident in Borg Olivier's memorandum rather unsettled the defence chiefs. These had known a different era and were accustomed to a more pliant manner of dealing in their onetime 'fortress'. It was their very first brush in a very long time with a Maltese leader who was telling

¹A complete copy of Borg Olivier's memorandum addressed to Sandys, 24 Nov. 1962, was enclosed by Admiral D. E. Holland-Martin, C-in-C, Mediterranean, 3 Dec. 1962, with his comments, to the Chief of the Defence Staff in the Ministry of Defence (Mountbatten), 'Maltese Demand for Independence', sec., 926/1342. See above, I, 5.

them just what he now expected them to do in matters relating to the defence of that 'fortress'. Admiral Holland-Martin was the first one to swallow hard on seeing Borg Olivier's memorandum, which was examined by the Heads of Services Committee. They believed it was important that their observations on certain points in the memorandum should be available to the Ministry of Defence and to Service Ministries before "any BRITISH position" was adopted with regard to defence matters.

The British heads of Services took strong exception to Borg Olivier's foray on a number of counts. In the first place, they felt "most strongly" that any agreement "must safeguard our own Defence interests." That would not be so if Malta were entitled to make other arrangements with other powers "as from time to time appeared to be in her interest." In the second place, they were

convinced that it will continue to be necessary for some form of reserve power in the field of defence to remain in the hands of HMG if we are to obtain our minimum strategic requirements and if, amongst other things, we are still responsible for the defence of Malta... Nothing less will ensure, in the last resort, that our unfettered use of our facilities will not be prejudiced by the action of some future MALTESE Government."

While finding it difficult to reconcile Borg Olivier's expectation that they would still be responsible for Malta's defence if asked to, they used that to strengthen their hand in lobbying for 'reserved powers' under the new constitution.

In addition to the future of the RMA and the Territorial Regiments, which, according to the Borg Olivier memorandum, should be included in a Defence Agreement, they mentioned the future of the Royal Navy's locally entered personnel and of the Royal Air Force (Malta), which had equally to be taken into account.

Their third main objection related to the use of land already held by the Services. They considered it "quite unacceptable" that the

continued use of some land already held by the Services "should be dependent on the consent of the MALTESE Government" as was implied by the words "subject to a few exceptions" (in Borg Olivier's memorandum). On the question of the terms on which surplus property was to be disposed of, irrespective of the outcome of negotiations on independence, they were awaiting a ruling from Service Ministries:

We think it quite unreasonable that these terms should make provision for the removal of 'all temporary buildings and unsightly objects' before land is returned, as is suggested in the memorandum.

In this 'counter-memorandum', signed by the Fortress Commander of Malta, Air Vice-Marshal J. G. Davis, the Heads of Services asked the C-in-C to forward these views to the Ministry of Defence "as a matter of urgency."²

Holland-Martin agreed with them. Moreover he mentioned three further points which he believed should be borne in mind in any defence discussions for an independent Malta. First, he said, Independence did not become a live issue in Malta again "until Borg Olivier felt that politically he could not return empty handed from his discussions in London last summer." Despite "the artificial respiration that he then applied", the admiral added, the majority of Maltese had shown "little enthusiasm for immediate independence" feeling that there were more pressing problems. Second, for most Maltese, "but not for Mintoff and his more ardent supporters", the "status" of independence was "much more important than the substance." And thirdly:

We will let ourselves in for endless trouble later, if any defence agreement is not in detail. Even then it will not prove workable unless we retain goodwill in this island.³

² Davis/Holland-Martin, 3 Dec. 1962, sec., enc. Holland-Martin, 3 Dec. 1962, *op.cit.*

³ Holland-Martin/Mountbatten, 3 Dec. 1962, *op.cit.*

In discussing with his advisers the suggested title heads for a Defence Agreement prepared by the Ministry of Defence, the Secretary of State for the Colonies felt, at this stage, that agreement on defence matters should, if possible, be dealt with in two parts. First, there should be a 'Treaty of Protection' under which Britain would agree to protect Malta, and Malta would undertake not to grant rights to other powers without Britain's consent. Second, there should be a more detailed Defence Agreement covering all the other matters of defence interest as necessary. The Treaty and Defence Agreement should be signed at the same time as any agreement on financial assistance; and all should be signed after independence, "i.e. in no circumstances should we be committed to an aid agreement without having secured our defence requirements".

Facilities made available to Britain, Sandys noted further, "should be equally available in peace and war." The Defence Agreement should specify the conceding of "overflying rights", while the meaning of "communications facilities" had to be spelled out in more detail. Any guarantees to employ Maltese labour "should be avoided." Another provision was to concern a Status of Forces Agreement. In deciding on this from existing models, it was thought that possibly that applicable to U.S. forces in Britain would be the best, in so far as this provided probably the most beneficial arrangements amongst the agreements applicable either to foreign forces in Britain or to British forces overseas.⁴

Another response to the Ministry of Defence on their draft for a Defence Agreement with Malta came from the Commonwealth Relations Office, as a revised draft was being prepared for the Oversea Co-ordinating Committee and other inter-departmental meetings on the subject. In view of their experience in relation to Ceylon, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the C.R.O. was not too keen on a defence agreement with an independent Malta, unless that were generally agreed to among the Maltese parties. They accepted such

⁴ Min., M.2A, sec., entitled 'Malta Discussions - Defence Agreement', 926/1342.

an agreement but with misgivings. "We think - again from past experience - that the main lines of any such agreement must be clearly seen to be accepted by an All Party Delegation." While the detailed drafting and the preparation of technical annexes could be left for negotiation between the British and Maltese governments before Independence Day, "we shall, I am sure, have to concede that the whole document must be subject to ratification by the Maltese Legislature after Independence." The point being made here clearly was that such an agreement would not be worth the paper it was written on if after Independence the same party or some other party were to simply disregard its provisions, as had already happened to Britain in other ex-colonies. That too was the point Holland-Martin was making when he spoke of the importance of retaining "goodwill" in relations between Britain and the Maltese after Independence. Independence was the greatest variable of all: nothing any longer could be determined or decreed in London as was the case before it; that also applied to 'agreements'. On the other hand, goodwill depended on many factors: moods and circumstances were known to change.

The second important point of a general nature made by the C.R.O. from Downing Street, and one which would recur, was that

no final decision should be taken about a Defence Agreement until we are clearer in our own minds whether or not Malta is likely to be accepted as a Member or Associate in some way of NATO. It would surely suit our book both economically and Defence-wise if our requirements in Malta could be brought under some NATO umbrella rather than standing out as a target for anti-Imperialist propaganda.

This point had come up in discussion on the morning of the same day during which Borg Olivier's memorandum was written - 28th November 1962. It had been raised by John Kisch from the Colonial Office, apparently on the assumption that Malta had a pro-Western government and therefore could be relied upon. The C.R.O. was more cautious:

However much we may believe today that a Maltese Government of the future will positively ask us to retain our Defence posture in the Island what may happen tomorrow, particularly with a Mintoff regime, is frankly quite unpredictable... experience has all too often shown that the atmosphere changes to a quite unexpected extent once the heady perfume of Independence has been sniffed.⁵

The Malayan model was chosen for the draft of the Malta agreement. Malaya was a special case involving the fight against the Communists and the complexity of S.E.A.T.O. obligations, but the British undertaking in respect of Malaya was a one-sided one. Some analysts felt that the Nigerian model, which provided for reciprocal arrangements for mutual defence, would be more advantageous to Britain, although that Nigerian agreement was already defunct.

The provision of specific training facilities in Britain was relegated to annex I of the draft, whereas it could perhaps have been integrated into the main text. On the other hand, there could have been a political reason for under-playing that possibility. This could be seen to be linked to the maintenance of British units to help maintain internal security in Malta, one of the most controversial provisions in the Defence Agreement as now proposed. In principle, it was arguable how British troops could operate for internal purposes in another independent country, although the actual size of the force or forces to be retained after Independence was still unclear. This was no doubt being put in as a precautionary measure, in the event that the Maltese authorities would be unable to maintain order in a crisis situation, and as much to protect British as Maltese interests. It was not known, however, what forces other NATO countries might wish to retain and what these would need as regards facilities for the movement and visits of aircraft or naval ships.

One provision which went against Maltese intentions was that not even NATO allies could obtain defence facilities except with the

⁵ Chadwick/Benwell, 28 Nov. 1962, conf., 56/33/1, 926/1342.

prior agreement of Her Majesty's Government. Unlike the agreements with Cyprus, the Malta draft specifically provided for consultation with the Maltese side regarding the level of the Forces.⁶

In drafting a Defence Agreement for Malta, Cyprus was very much on British minds. There was some disagreement as to what had caused the troubles experienced over the Cyprus agreement, whether that was because of its "complication", or rather whether that was because of the use of "generalities", or where NATO Status Agreement had been followed "without sufficient regard to the particular circumstances of Cyprus." According to the Treasury Solicitor in his intervention with the Ministry of Defence about the Malta draft, the Cyprus agreement had lacked clear statements that the Republic and Local Authorities were "not entitled to control the use to which Service land is put", and that the Republic was not entitled "to prohibit imports for use in Service land or the passage of goods through its territory en route to the United Kingdom territory of the Sovereign Base Areas." Generalities were inadequate and due regard should be taken of that in formulating the Malta Defence Agreement, even if that could be done succinctly. It was better to work ahead, and that the Service Departments should proceed to produce "at this stage" drafts of the provisions thought to be necessary, which should then be forwarded to the political Departments for comment. "We do not want a last-minute rush."⁷

In all this discussion, the most threatening proposal from the point of view of the pro-independence parties in Malta was the one insisting that reserved power should be retained by the Crown in the area of defence. That would seriously curtail the sovereignty of a future Maltese government, and it could even imperil it politically.

On the civilian side, both Wakefield and his deputy Watt at the UK Commission in Malta did not agree with this lobby for reserved

⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 1-4.

⁷ Hall/Stephens, 14 Dec. 1962, sec., 926/1342.

powers. One of them, Ian Watt, said so explicitly to the Colonial Office. Probably without realising it, he was stepping on the toes of a very old tension and controversy, which had bedevilled Anglo-Maltese relations from their very genesis in the Napoleonic era: the difference in approach and in mentality between the civilian and the military authority in administering the government:

I think that Wakefield, like myself, has reservations about accepting, in terms, the arguments of the Heads of Services that some 'form of reserved power' must be retained to protect British defence interests in Malta after Independence. I personally do not see how Independence is compatible with anything which I understand could be called 'reserved power' - but perhaps I spent too long in General Department and have a purist's approach to these things.

Watt was stepping on the toes of another underlying tension: that between the Ministry of Defence and the Colonial Office, in their tendency to see things differently. He said he agreed however with Admiral Holland-Martin that most Maltese were unenthusiastic about independence, that for most of them status was more important than substance, and that a detailed defence agreement was as necessary as was the retention of goodwill in this island.⁸

At the same time that this debate on defence was picking up, London was also looking carefully at the advantages and disadvantages of a Malta-E.E.C. customs union and at Malta becoming a member of the E.E.C., a membership which had so far eluded Britain herself. It was concluded however that at that stage no complete assessment could be made: "this will depend to a significant extent on the terms which she can obtain in negotiations with the Community."⁹ While EEC membership was not strictly a defence matter, it would have had the advantage of integrating Malta within a Western European politico-

⁸ Watt/Kisch, 7 Dec. 1962, sec., 926/1342. The C-in-C sent copies of his exchanges with the Defence ministry to the UK Commission.

⁹ *Aide Memoire*, 26 Nov. 1962, enc. 926/1342.

economic structure, thereby ensuring a degree of overall political stability and some built-in assistance in the generation of economic activity and prosperity. It would help anchor Malta in the Western European family of nations, and such anchorage was a security concern.¹⁰

Although unemployment is usually seen in social and economic terms, in formulating a defence agreement the Chiefs of Staff were concerned with its *military* implications and repercussions. Scared by the projections of unemployment reaching up to 30% of the Maltese working population by 1967, emanating from the findings of Dr Stolper and of the Joint Study Group, the Chiefs of Staff assumed that labour unrest would destabilise not only the economy but also the political situation. As a result, they envisaged a situation where it would be necessary for British forces to intervene, if only to protect British defence interests on the Island but, possibly, generally to assist the Maltese forces in maintaining order.

By September 1962 the Chiefs of Staff Committee, comprising Lord Mountbatten as Chief of the Defence Staff and Lord Carrington as First Sea Lord, among other senior military officers, had already approved an initial report examining a Colonial Office paper on the subject of Malta. Prompted by Malta's demand for independence only weeks earlier, the C.O. had drawn up a confidential internal report setting out political, defence, financial and economic considerations arising from it. Considering that Malta's demand had only been made on 20th August 1962, the alacrity of the Colonial Office's response was indicative.

Mid-February 1963 was set as a target date for the Ministry of Defence to hand over a first draft of the Defence Agreement for Malta. By 18th September the chiefs of staff had already examined an elaborate C.O. paper and approved a report about it.¹¹ Between

¹⁰ On financial discussions, see below, III, 16.

¹¹ Hallett/Mountbatten, 31 Dec. 1962, sec., 926/1872/48489.

then and March they met several times, sometimes inviting the Heads of Services from Malta as well as representatives from other ministries or departments apart from Defence, such as the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office. In these meetings they went through with a tooth comb the facilities which Malta offered, contemplating various scenarios which could arise as a way of knowing what would be needed militarily to react to these in turn. Hypothetical responses such as those code-named 'Operation Cartwheel' and 'Operation Lear' were dreamt up to counter any unrest, insurgency or other emergency from what strength would still be available in Malta or, if necessary, with additional help from the UK or elsewhere in the region. One central question was whether it would still be necessary or advisable to retain a 'garrison' in Malta after Independence.

The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, wrote to the Chief of the Defence Staff in December 1962 alerting him to the disquieting conclusions of the Joint Study Group as to the effect of the Services rundown. Unemployment in 1967, they estimated, was expected to total some 21,500 on fairly favourable assumptions, and over 28,500 on less favourable assumptions. That was out of a working population which in 1962 was about 90,000. The financial forecast was correspondingly depressing. Admiral Holland-Martin was not aware of any plans by Her Majesty's Government to alleviate this situation: "certainly independence for Malta will not help."

He added:

Obviously if unemployment builds up to anything near even the lower figure Malta will be faced with major Internal Security problems and there will be an abundance of ill will towards the British.

A report on Baileys, known as the Muirie Report, which had just been undertaken, made the Dockyard "a tender spot":

I am told by the United Kingdom Commissioner that it is possible that Baileys might, within the next month, dismiss

a considerable number of employees or even close the dockyard gates. This would face us with an explosive situation with little or no notice.

He did not know if the Colonial Office were keeping the Chief of the Defence Staff informed of these developments, but it was important that they should do so.¹²

What was being considered, clearly, was not simply the staggered discharge of small numbers of Dockyard workers. Borg Olivier's resignation threat may well have stopped in its tracks any intention to just close down the Dockyard - as a non-commercial proposition, a write-off - causing social havoc among thousands of families who had traditionally worked for the British there, but for whom it was impossible to create new openings at the twitch of a thumb. The security implications of the social unrest thus provoked at a stroke would evidently be high.

Holland-Martin's warning was on the agenda of a special meeting of the Vice Chiefs of Staff on 17th January 1963, which Mountbatten wanted to chair himself.¹³ In the meantime the Joint Planning Committee were similarly instructed to take this matter into account in their examination of the question of the garrison in Malta, while the Ministry of Defence were invited to seek the views of the Colonial Office about it.

The planners concluded that for reasons of security of British defence facilities it would be necessary to keep one battalion in Malta

¹² Holland-Martin/Mountbatten, 19 Dec. 1962, sec., 'Effect of Services Rundown on the Employment in and the Economy of Malta', annex to COS. 1023/4/1/63, 926/1872/48489. On Dr Borg Olivier's threat that he would resign if workers were discharged from the Dockyard without prior consultation with the Maltese government, see above on his meeting with Sandys in February 1963, ch. I, 8. Borg Olivier's resignation threat added to the panic, necessitating quite a discussion about what to do if that happened.

¹³ Stephens/Cumming-Bruce, 8 Jan. 1963, conf., 926/1872/48489.

after independence. Given the Services rundown, the probable reductions in employment at the dockyard and a continuing high birthrate, and the fact that unemployment could amount to as much as 30% in the coming five years, it was doubtful if whatever was done these consequences could be made tolerable. Nor could Malta, it was felt, stand another blow of the scale which would be involved if the battalion forming the garrison were withdrawn.

The C.O. wondered whether it was appropriate for the planners to refer to a "garrison" after independence. Their statement on the retention and possible use of certain British forces, could be toned down to read that they were advised that "we might be asked by the Malta Government to assist if it became clear..."¹⁴

Mountbatten opened the full-scale meeting of the 17th January, 1963 by welcoming to it the C-in-C, Mediterranean, Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin; the General-Officer-Commanding, Malta and Libya, Major General the Lord Thurlow; and the Air Officer Commanding, Malta, Air Vice-Marshal J. G. Davis. Part of the meeting was also attended by Captain M. Hodges, Controller, Government Signals Service Planning Staff; and Major General A.M.W. Whistler, Director, Joint Communications Electronics Staff, among several other officials and officers.

The first to address this meeting, Holland-Martin elaborated on the points he had made in his earlier letter, which those present around the table had before them. The economy of Malta was very much dependent on the presence of the Services; its standard of living was much higher than elsewhere in the Southern Mediterranean, "and through our efforts the Maltese people had enjoyed a secure existence in the past." There was still a fund of goodwill for the UK in Malta but there were signs that this goodwill was being lost in the face of the expected consequences of the rundown. As seen from Malta, the British government's aims appeared to be to run down

¹⁴ Min., Fairclough/Cumming-Bruce, 10 Jan. 1963, 926/1872/48489.

as much and as quickly as possible while preserving the goodwill of the local population. Plans had been drawn up for the first two of these aims, but not for the third.

He then detailed the findings of the Joint Study Group noting that until then the presence of the Services in Malta provided 23% of the employment, 33% of the national income, and 56% of the foreign exchange earnings. The unemployment figures for November 1962 showed 6,200 unemployed out of a working population of 90,000 but, according to the Joint Study Group's findings, by 1967 this would go up to between 20,000 or 19% to 29,000 or 28% of the working population. It was clear from the Joint Study Group assessment that the goodwill of the population could not be preserved even if unemployment reached the 20,000 figure. The effects of the rundown would be felt at all points in the economy; the Island would hold no attraction and capital would be driven out:

In fact when Dr Borg Olivier made his demand for independence, £7 m. was immediately reinvested outside Malta. Tourists would be most unlikely to visit an unfriendly Island, and it might well be that SACEUR would be unwilling to maintain CINCAFMED Headquarters in Malta.

Although it was recognised that Malta had been fortunate in achieving a high standard of living for comparatively little effort, "the people had not yet been taught to govern themselves" and the shock which their economy was expected to face would be beyond the capacity of their government to withstand. A cut in the standard of living to that of Sicily or Southern Italy would certainly have serious repercussions on the goodwill of the people. It would be extremely difficult in the period of four years to the end of the Services' rundown to overcome employment problems and achieve economic stability. As an example, he noted how under the five year plan (under the colonial government) 4,000 new jobs were to be available by 1964 but to date only 900 had been created.

Holland-Martin then brought up, inevitably, the dockyard question. Present problems were resulting in much uncertainty. There had

already been a one-day strike, and an overtime ban (by the GWU) was currently in force:

The situation could well become explosive if large numbers of the workers became unemployed. The Vice Chairman of Bailey (Malta) Limited had given a television interview this week and had put the onus for any unemployment in the dockyard on H.M. Government. At the present time, 60% of the work in the dockyard was for the Royal Navy, as against a former figure of 80%.

The independence of Malta “would not help the United Kingdom and might in fact hinder our enjoyment of the facilities which we wished to use.” The preservation of the goodwill of the population, he stressed again, was essential “if we were to retain our requirements there.” Furthermore, he concluded, “we had a moral responsibility for ensuring the economic stability of Malta.”¹⁵

The Air Officer Commanding, Malta, Air Vice Marshal Davis, said that it was difficult to imagine the effects that the Services’ rundown might have in Malta. In the present ‘business as usual’ atmosphere there was no internal security problem and no requirement for guarding installations - “there was not one armed sentry in Malta”. With one-fifth to one-third of the working population unemployed, however, it might well be necessary “to retain the use of our facilities by force.”

Lord Thurlow, the General Officer Commanding, Malta and Libya, said that the protection of military installations and Service personnel and their families “would be extremely difficult if the Maltese population became hostile.” Installations and living accommodation were so closely integrated with the Maltese community that it would require “a force of six battalions” to handle isolated outbreaks of sabotage, and more units would be needed “if

¹⁵ “The Military Implications of Unemployment in Malta’, COS 4th Meeting/63, 17 Jan. 1963, sec., ff. 1-2, 926/1872/48489.

full cover was to be given to all our installations.” Thurlow mentioned as just one example, the fuel pipe-line to the airfield which ran for three miles above ground.

Lord Mountbatten shared the feelings of the C-in-C and the Heads of Services in Malta on “the disastrous future that faced the Maltese people.” He felt that “people who had supported the United Kingdom for generations would be turned against us.” While fully appreciating the effects on Malta, he was nevertheless convinced that militarily they were taking the right action:

Our strategy required no more than forward operating facilities in Malta, and this inevitably led to a rundown of the Services in the Island with its consequent effect upon the Maltese economy. A further delay in the rundown would mean that Services would be expected to keep personnel misemployed in order to provide employment for the Maltese population.¹⁶

For the Colonial Office, Mr John Kisch noted that now that Malta was self-governing it was no longer the task of the British government to make long-term economic plans for her; indeed the Malta Government had engaged a UN expert to assist in formulating an economic programme. In recent discussions Dr Borg Olivier had not been ready to discuss what help would be required “after independence”. Nevertheless, the UK had been intimated that financial assistance would not necessarily be a “once for all” payment. “When Malta became independent a different state of affairs would of course prevail, and Colonial Office responsibility would cease.” Kisch did not think that the present difficulties in the running of the dockyard would provoke an internal security problem.

The Chiefs of Staff Committee was of the view that Britain’s use of facilities in Malta was essential. Much of their current contingency

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 3-4.

planning depended on the use of staging facilities at Luqa. Naval communications and SIGINT requirements had also to be considered. It was decided that the Joint Planning Staff should now carry out a study of the effect on British strategy of a decision to withdraw completely from the Island. The effect on current contingency plans had to be clearly shown. The naval rundown in Malta had already been extended as much as possible, and the best practicable arrangements had been made for giving naval work to the dockyard. It was important that

the Defence Agreement should give us authority to reinforce Malta for the protection of British lives and property. Plans to cover more internal security problems of varying intensity should be formulated and forwarded for consideration.

If Britain withdrew or was forced to withdraw from Malta, there was "the danger that another country might attempt to take our place and to our disadvantage." The UN economic expert (Stolper) believed that economic stability could only be achieved by reducing the rate of the rundown of the Services. Although emigration appeared to offer a means of alleviating unemployment, it was usually the more enterprising people who emigrated, leaving the unskilled population as a continuing problem.

Summing up, Mountbatten held that the three Service Commanders in Malta had shown that "a potentially very dangerous situation existed." The moral issues apart, if the Maltese population became actively hostile,

not only might we lose facilities which had in past evaluations been considered militarily essential to us in the long term, but we might in the near future find it necessary to provide six or more major units which we could ill spare.

Mountbatten believed that "the unpalatable truths should be given the widest possible circulation." He would draw the attention of the Minister of Defence to the situation and would forward to him the study by the Joint Planning Staff as soon as it was available. Holland-

Martin as well as the Joint Planning Staff were instructed to take action on the proposed study about a "complete withdrawal" from Malta scenario.¹⁷

The defence chiefs of staff then proceeded to consider the report they had before them from the Joint Planning Staff about the retention of the Malta garrison. Recapitulating decisions reached in earlier enquiries about British defence requirements in Malta in the 1960s, it was noted in the Joint Planning Staff's report that Malta would only be required in future to provide forward operating facilities for the Royal Navy; operating, staging, and air reinforcement facilities for the Royal Air Force; accommodation, training areas and communications for Headquarters Troops Malta and Libya and for one major unit; and the Special Wireless Station. Although their facilities would be reduced, they would still require maintaining a number of dispersed installations throughout the Island. In this connection, at a meeting on 8th May 1962, Wakefield had informed them that, in the event of a breakdown in internal security and without the support of the police, six battalions would be required to guard static installations. With regard to land forces, it had been agreed that the present requirement for one major unit was dictated by the need to provide an immediately available force for the preservation of law and order while Britain retained sovereignty over the Island.

In September 1962 the Colonial Office had concluded that Britain should aim to secure the continued and unhampered use of the defence facilities required but they had also suggested that, if Malta were independent, the purpose for which the army garrison was primarily required would disappear. The Colonial Office were now stating that they wished the battalion to stay "for economic reasons" and that Sandys would wish to be consulted before any other decision was taken. A decision on whether or not a garrison would be needed after independence had been deferred. Provided that the Maltese government was willing, it should at least be retained "until the situation in Malta itself, and in the area generally, had clarified."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 4-5.

After independence, when Britain would no longer be responsible for internal security, it would be more difficult to safeguard the dispersed installations containing the military facilities required. They must, however, be "in a position to safeguard Luqa airfield, thus ensuring our point of entry." They then considered the military implications of escalating unemployment, to which Holland-Martin's warning to Mountbatten had drawn attention. They were advised that in the negotiations leading up to the Defence Agreement "there is a possibility that we will be asked by the Maltese Government to provide assistance in the maintenance of law and order after independence." Independence and reliance on the forces of an external power for the maintenance of law and order were incompatible. Furthermore, under independence, the protection of foreign lives and property became the responsibility of the local government. The principal reason behind the Maltese wish to retain a major unit was probably the spending power of the men but, whatever the reason,

we should meet such a request at this difficult period as a means both of paving the way to acceptance of our defence requirements and of safeguarding our defence facilities... although Malta should not be considered as a mounting base for operations in the Mediterranean, this major unit, or part of it, could be used for operations in Libya in an emergency.

The situation in North Africa and the Levant was far from stable and this would seem to be no time to reduce Britain's already exiguous forces in this area. They therefore concluded that an army garrison of one major unit would be required in Malta after independence "to secure and ensure the unhampered use of our essential defence installations and our main point of entry and to provide a stabilising influence in the Island and the area as a whole."¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Retention of the Malta Garrison', Annex to COS. 29/63, para. 1-7, ff. 1-2, and para. 7, f. 3, 'Annex (Concluded)', 926/1872/48489. In another version of these minutes it was concluded that "a land force of one major unit should be stationed in Malta after independence if requested by the Malta Government..."

In opening the discussion on this report, Mountbatten recalled that a decision about keeping a garrison in Malta or not had been deferred. They had appreciated, however, that current events in the area indicated that "a somewhat fluid and possibly dangerous period lay ahead," and that "this situation would not stabilise with the grant of independence to Malta, particularly if this should occur in the immediate future." Now that Malta had applied to be granted independence, the Committee had to decide whether or not land forces were required to remain there in order that the Ministry of Defence could complete the first draft of the defence agreement for Malta.

In supporting what the Joint Planning Staff had recommended, Sir William Pike substantiated his argument by reference to an increasingly volatile situation in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. To start with, he mentioned in particular the recent assassination of the Deputy Army Chief of Staff in Libya. Apart from that fatal incident, there was the dispute in Cyprus "between the Turks and Greeks" over the municipalities, the internal situation in Syria and the Egyptian intervention in the Yemen. All that pointed to the need to retain a battalion in Malta "as a stabilising factor in the area." To implement their strategy, it was necessary to retain a number of facilities in Malta, in particular the use of the airfields, the Naval forward operating base, and the wireless station. In order to secure these, it was necessary for a battalion to be stationed in the Island for their protection:

After independence the primary responsibility for internal security would devolve on the Maltese Government. If the Maltese Government requested assistance, it would of course be given, but in order to prevent adverse publicity, initial action should certainly be carried out by Maltese forces.¹⁹

¹⁹ 'Retention of the Malta Garrison', C.O.S. 4th Meeting/63, 17 Jan. 1963, f. 6, 926/1872/48489.

In confirming this decision, the Chiefs of Staff considered that the Maltese police had been adequate to deal with trouble arising from limited industrial unrest, but they would not be capable of dealing with greater disorders. The army in Malta had recently been asked to assist in the event of trouble arising from the dockyard dispute. Another factor in the decision was that the retention of a battalion would assist the Island's economy, with the Colonial Office being strongly in favour of that. The terms under which a battalion could be stationed in Malta after independence would need to be clearly defined in the defence agreement.²⁰

In reply to the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Minister of Defence in a minute suggested that "we should plan to establish some of our NATO forces there." Current developments in Europe may facilitate "the running down of BAOR and accelerate the possibility of our taking over roles on the outposts and flanks of NATO." The Minister of Defence therefore asked the Chiefs of Staff to provide an additional study and to report to him on what barrack accommodation existed in Malta and what units could be accommodated there.²¹

In a separate investigation, the Joint Administrative Planning Staff therefore detailed the availability of barrack accommodation in Malta, vacant or occupied, noting also the downgrading of Ta' Qali airfield in Attard to a care and maintenance basis by 1st April 1963. For the Royal Navy, naval accommodation could be made available, for example, at Hal Far, including Kalafrana, and at the Royal Marine Training Centre in Ghajn Tuffieha. Other accommodation was at Manoel Island (*HMS Phoenicia*). For the army, there were the barracks at St George's Bay and at St Andrew's (both of these classified as being in St Julian's), Ghadira in Mellieha, and Ghajn Tuffieha. For the Royal Air Force, there was Ta' Qali.²² Most of this

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 7.

²¹ Watkins/Mountbatten, 24 Jan. 1963, sec., 926/1872/48489.

²² Invariably spelt as 'Takali' or, at best, 'Ta Kali'.

barrack accommodation would be vacated on 31st March 1964 or 31st March 1965.²³

By the end of February the Chiefs of Staff had discussed at length what the effect on British strategy would be if it was decided to withdraw from Malta. Such a study necessarily involved looking into what facilities Malta offered or could offer, to set these pluses against the minuses resulting from a complete withdrawal. In this sense, here was an interesting exercise to take stock of the place's worth or otherwise: what would we miss if we left. It was a hypothetical exercise because Britain had no intention of withdrawing completely from Malta in the early 1960s. In fact, an earlier assessment on British strategy in the Sixties had stated that British military commitments in the Mediterranean would be the support of NATO and CENTO, the preservation of British air and sea routes in the area, and the discharge of any remaining treaty and other obligations. "We decided that whether or not Malta became independent, the minimum facilities required there would be..."

What would the effects of a British withdrawal from Malta in 1963-1964 have been on British strategy in the Mediterranean?

In so far as NATO was concerned, it was felt that Malta was not vital to NATO in the discharge of its responsibilities. They were advised, however, that NATO would be "deeply disturbed by the prospect of an independent Malta, particularly if, in seeking to fill the vacuum created by our withdrawal, Malta became involved with the Soviet bloc." Britain was expected to do her best "to ensure Malta's continued alignment with the West." In any case, it was of the utmost importance "both to NATO and to ourselves" that Communist bloc bases were not established in Malta.

In the event of a withdrawal from Malta, special arrangements would have to be negotiated by NATO for the retention of

²³ 'Barrack Accommodation in Malta', 4 Feb. 1963, sec., annex to COS 64/63, 926/1872/48489.

CINCAFMED's Headquarters, the air squadrons, and other facilities at present on the Island. Alternatively, they would have to be located elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Although that would not present any great physical difficulties, Britain would be obliged, as a member of NATO, to contribute towards the re-establishment of these units and facilities. The Chiefs of Staff were aware also of "suggestions that Malta might be used as a base for certain of the Polaris submarines assigned to NATO", and that "the United States Government is negotiating for a site for a tropospheric scatter station." Britain's withdrawal could jeopardise these arrangements.²⁴

The loss of defence facilities in Malta would have no direct bearing on Britain's ability to meet her present commitments in the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO).

As for air routes, the story was different. Until there were established routes to the Middle and the Far East around Africa, it was essential to many of Britain's reinforcement plans and to strategic air movement generally, for Britain to retain at least one British controlled airfield in the Mediterranean. Such airfields existed in Malta, Libya and Cyprus. The principal LRT airfield in the area, because of its geographical position, was El Adem in Libya. The Idris, Akrotiri and Luqa airfields in Libya, Cyprus and Malta respectively were employed in a subsidiary role. If in certain circumstances Britain did not have complete freedom of action in the use of the Libyan airfields, and as Akrotiri was the least conveniently situated for staging, Luqa would assume considerable importance. Staging facilities in Malta were, the Chiefs of Staff established,

essential for deployment to Cyprus and beyond of medium and short range transport, fighter, and close support aircraft, at least until the 1970s. If we did not have these facilities, we would have either to employ NATO airfields or

²⁴ On the possibility of using Malta as an American base for polaris submarines and a tropospheric scatter station, see above, II, 11.

to provide flight-refuelling facilities; to each of these courses, however, there are major practical, political, or financial objections.

The loss of Malta therefore would greatly reduce flexibility, and force Britain to rely on airfield facilities in France, Italy and possibly Greece, as well as to plan for flight refuelling where practicable.

Sea routes were not any less important. Malta was "in a position to command the main sea route through the Mediterranean." If Britain withdrew and her influence were to be replaced by that of the Communist bloc, this important route would be "seriously threatened." Naval facilities as such were of secondary importance to Britain because she could make more use of Gibraltar. Malta provided forward naval operating facilities, but these could be replaced by the provision of additional fuel storage at Gibraltar at a cost of £2 m. and with the afloat support, which was already planned.

Then there were communications and the so-called 'Sigint' facilities. Malta provided wireless communications to and from ships in the Mediterranean and northern Red Sea, for the conduct of air operations from and staging through Malta herself, and for military operations in Libya. This was "an essential part of the Royal Navy's strategic communication network to the Far East and of the naval world-wide ship/shore network." The loss of these facilities would involve an expensive replacement programme costing some £3 m. for the UK and about £4.5 m. for NATO. The strategic and ship/shore communications system would be less efficient.

The Sigint Station in Malta was important but most facilities could be incorporated with those of the station in Cyprus. This did not apply to the Malta's station's 'DF facility', the loss of which would be serious. Some reduction in overall British signals intelligence capabilities would be inevitable and, if Cyprus were subsequently to prove unavailable, the implications would be "very serious indeed."

Taken regionally over a wide expanse, the loss of Malta would

considerably hamper if not handicap British - and even Anglo-American - emergency operations, all the way from Libya to Kuwait. The use of the military facilities which Malta provided in 1963 was specifically included in "our intervention plan for Libya, the US/UK plan for the same area, the air reinforcement plans for the Mediterranean and Middle East, and in several evacuation plans." Furthermore, some peacetime command, administrative control and support for the Army, was based in Malta. Use might also be made of Malta, as an alternative to either Cyprus or Libya, in the Anglo-American plans and studies for the Lebanon, Jordan and possible Arab-Israeli conflicts, the internal security reinforcement of Cyprus, and in certain other evacuation plans.

On the military drawing board, Malta was intimately tied to Libya. In the then existing plan, Malta played a fundamental part, providing command, communications and administrative arrangements, in addition to general staging and operating facilities. Without Malta, the concept of the reinforcement operation would have to be recast and the resultant command, communications, and administrative arrangements would be less satisfactory and more expensive. Britain feared that in that case she could lose access to 75% of the TUXEDO POL stockpile, which was held by civil contract in Malta. Moreover, there would be a timing penalty particularly in the provision of logistical support. Britain would have to rely on the use of NATO airfields for part of the air reinforcement, which would undoubtedly lead to practical and political difficulties, and the same would apply to an Anglo-American intervention in Libya.

The Royal Air Force planned to use Malta as a base for medium bombers, fighters, and perhaps light bombers, to meet possible commitments in the Near or Middle East, either in support of intervention plans, for example in Libya or Kuwait, or for deterrent purposes. In the event of Malta being lost to Britain, such forces could only be deployed to Cyprus. That would be militarily less desirable because the aircraft would be more vulnerable to attack, particularly from Egypt. Alternative arrangements however could be made for evacuation plans.

After engaging in this exhaustive survey, the Chiefs of Staff basically concluded that although no longer of overriding strategic importance to Britain or NATO, Malta was so sited geographically that it could be a strategic asset "of the greatest value" to the Communists. Any relocation of national or NATO facilities in Malta would directly affect the efficiency of maritime and air operations and would involve both Britain and her allies in considerable expense, greatly reducing the flexibility of air reinforcement at least until the 1970s, and costing some £2 m. to have forward operating facilities replaced. The loss of strategic and ship/shore wireless facilities in Malta would involve a replacement programme of some £7.5 m. for Britain and NATO for a less efficient system. The loss of Sigint facilities would inevitably reduce Britain's communications intelligence potential and that would be very serious indeed if Cyprus were to prove unavailable. The most serious aspect of the loss of facilities in Malta to Britain's intervention and evacuation plans in the Mediterranean would concern intervention in Libya, since Malta played a fundamental part in the operational plan, command, communications and administration.²⁵

The Chiefs of Staff approved this secret report at their seventeenth meeting so far in 1963, on 28th February, and asked the Acting Chief of Defence Staff to forward it to the Minister of Defence as an expression of their views.²⁶

²⁵ See 'The Effect on British Strategy of a Decision to Withdraw from Malta', annex, COS 94/63, sec., ff. 1-5, 926/1872/48489. A more elaborate examination is outside the scope of this book but military historians interested in a regional study may refer to specific more detailed surveys and plans, e.g. COS (62) 358 on the British intervention plan for Libya; COS (62) 332 on the joint Anglo-American plan for the same area; COS (62) 340 Appendix 'A', Ser. 1, 3, 4 and 16, on the air reinforcement plans for the Mediterranean and the Middle East; COS (62) 340 Appendix 'A', Section 'B' on evacuation plans; COS (62) 339 on the contingencies for Lebanon; COS (60) 201 for Jordan, etc.

²⁶ Enc., Watkins/Chiefs of Staff Committee, 28 Feb. 1963, sec., 926/1872/48489. No copy of the document could be made without the authority of its secretary, J. K. Watkins.

In a follow-up to it, the Air Ministry sent a note covering the requirement for a Royal Air Force Regiment squadron to be made available from Cyprus to secure Luqa airfield and guard the dispersed and vulnerable R.A.F. installations on the Island. In view of a reduction in the air transport forces available to the Near East Air Force Headquarters, with the consequent difficulty in providing the necessary airlift to transport an R.A.F. squadron from Cyprus to Malta, the Air Ministry recommended that 'Operation Lear' (for the internal security reinforcement of Malta from the UK) be amended. A field squadron from the R.A.F. Regiment Strategic Reserve could be sent to Malta from the UK, should the Near East Air Force be unable to meet this commitment.²⁷

In addition to the amended version of this contingency plan to secure the evidently all-important Luqa airfield by means of a 'field' squadron from the Strategic Reserve sent 'at light scale', and perhaps otherwise as well, reference was made to an 'Operation Cartwheel'. This concerned internal security in Malta generally, presumably in the event of unrest, which the Maltese forces could not cope with. There had been some talk of this in more than one venue. In their letter to the Ministry of Defence some weeks later, the Foreign Office referred to the plan on 'I.S. Reinforcement of Malta' (I.S. in military jargon meaning 'internal security') and they wrote thus:

While we see no reason for asking that the Foreign Office should be consulted before operation 'Cartwheel' is put into effect, we have enough of an interest in developments in Malta to ask that we should be promptly informed. I should be grateful, therefore, if at the same time as the Chief of Defence Staff authorises the implementation of the plan..., information could be passed to the Foreign Office.²⁸

²⁷ Watkins/Chiefs of Staff Committee, 1 Mar. 1963, sec., 926/2076.

²⁸ Arthur/Wright, 8 May 1963, sec., 926/2976.

Borg Olivier and his advisers were quite secretive about the more potentially controversial goings-on in their negotiations on defence matters with the British until the contents of the Defence Agreement were finally made public. Indeed, there was no final agreement between the two sides until the last minute. There is every reason to suppose that Borg Olivier would himself not have known of the more secret plans and discussions being held, especially in relation to defence, security and strategy. In May the Maltese public got an inkling of what was going on from a different source, a press conference called by Lord Carrington, the First Sea Lord, at Villa Portelli in Kalkara.

The Royal Navy, Carrington announced, had no intention of setting up a base for British polaris submarines in Malta.²⁹ The fact that Malta was now used as a forward operating base did not mean that it was no longer strategically important. There were theatres which were more important than others; hence the cutting down on one particular area to reinforce the other. It did not mean that the Mediterranean was less important; it meant, so he said, that the Mediterranean was less likely to be a trouble spot than the others. Carrington also announced that the frigate H.M.S. Troubridge would be going to Malta for an overhaul but he did not foresee another ship of that class being sent to Malta for such extensive refits. He mentioned that the rundown had been extended from four years to five following representations by the Prime Minister of Malta, and that the question of handing over

²⁹ It is not clear why Carrington said this because in so far as the polaris submarine base was concerned it was the Americans, not the British, who had been mentioned. It is possible that the British individually or in conjunction with NATO might also have considered, and dismissed, that prospect, as the Americans certainly did. It is possible that he only made the statement in answer to a question from the floor, and it was then highlighted in the press report; but what actually had he called the press conference for? It was probably just a public relations stunt.

lands which were no longer required for defence purposes was under discussion.³⁰

Whatever Carrington had told the press in Malta the previous May, in February 1964 the Chief of the Defence Staff wrote to the Minister of Defence to say that: "it is clear that Malta is becoming much more important to our future strategy than we had previously believed." The Defence Planning Staff had been instructed to report "as a matter of urgency." In a previous minute, Mountbatten had already told him that they had set in hand a study "to re-examine the future strategic importance of Malta in the light of the new circumstances in the Mediterranean." The Colonial Office representative at a meeting of the chiefs of staff on 25th February 1964 was informing the Colonial Secretary "of the importance we now attach to ensuring our security of tenure in Malta."

What were these new circumstances? Mountbatten summed them up in one paragraph for the Minister's benefit. A new situation had developed in Cyprus as a result of which there was "a strong possibility of our present facilities on the Island being denied to us in the future." If that happened, it would be unlikely "that we would be able to obtain new base facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean to off-set the loss of facilities in Cyprus." Moreover, although the existing Anglo-Libyan Treaty did not expire until 1973, it was feared that the death of the elderly King would jeopardise the security of tenure of British facilities in Libya. In that case, "we would be denied the use of the airfield at El Adem which is a major link in our air staging routes to the Middle and Far East."³¹

³⁰ 'First Lord on Island's Strategic Importance', *Times of Malta*, 4 May 1963, enc. 926/1872/48489. Present at the conference, attended by Maltese and foreign journalists, were: Holland-Martin; the Flag Officer, Malta, Rear-Admiral Lord Kelburn; together with Sir Clifford Jarret, Secretary of the Admiralty; Rear-Admiral J.O.C Hayes, Naval Secretary; and W. I. Tupman, Carrington's Principal Private Secretary.

³¹ Chief of the Defence Staff/Minister of Defence, 25 Feb. 1964, top sec., annex B to min. 4, Part 1 to COS, 17th meeting/64, f.30, 926/1873/48489.

After fighting against Italian occupation led mainly by the Senussi of Cyrenaica and the subsequent defeat of the Axis in the Second World War, and a stint of British military administration, Libya had become an independent state in 1951 under Sayed Mohamed Idris of Senussi. Idris, the Sunni emir of Cyrenaica and head of the Islamic revivalist Senussi order, became King of Libya. The creation of a Libyan army as soon as possible was, he told an interviewer in 1952, "the dearest wish of our heart."³² To create a representative body of Libyans out of an untutored, inexperienced, and widely scattered people, deprived over the centuries of any first hand knowledge of parliamentary or political precepts, was something of a *tour de force*, noted the same interviewer.³³ Libya had earned the goodwill of Western powers, which helped her to achieve independence and provided the substantial economic aid necessary for economic reconstruction. While advocating a good neighbour policy with all neighbouring Arab states, the King and his leading Ministers were agreed that this continued goodwill was absolutely essential for the maintenance of Libya's independence and her social and economic development. Opposed to this realistic school, there were pan-Arab groups who insisted on an aggressive foreign policy. Economic assistance extended to Libya by Britain and the U.S.A. was given partly as a *quid pro quo* for rights granted by Libya to these powers for military purposes and partly for economic development.³⁴ In the early 1950s, after controlling a palace crisis, Libya had signed a 20 year treaty of friendship and alliance with Britain under which the latter received military bases in exchange for financial and military assistance. Libya then signed an agreement with the U.S.A. under which the latter also secured military base rights, subject to renewal in 1970, in return for economic aid. The

³² H. Serrano Villard, *Libya: A New Kingdom of North Africa* (Cornell Univ. Press, New York, 1956), p. 50.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁴ Majid Khadduri, *Modern Libya: A Study in Political Development* (John Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, 1963), pp. 323, 335.

most important of the U.S. installations in Libya was Wheelus Air Base, near Tripoli. Reservations set aside in the desert were used by British and American military aircraft based in Europe as practice firing ranges.

Libya's dependence on foreign aid changed suddenly in June 1959 when research prospectors from Esso confirmed the location of major petroleum deposits at Zaltan in Cyrenaica. Further discoveries followed and commercial development was quickly initiated by concession holders who returned 50% of their profits to the Libyan government in taxes. As development of petroleum resources progressed in the early 1960s, Libya launched her first five-year plan for 1963-1968.³⁵

As Khadduri noted in 1963: "The freer the Libyan government becomes from foreign powers, the more dependent it will be on popular support." When President Nasser adopted the policy of Arab unity, calling for the establishment of an empire extending from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, the imagination of many Libyans was fired and an increasing number of them aspired to join such a union. Like many young Arab nationalists to the East, Libyan nationalists regarded the regime established under the federal union as an artificial structure imposed upon them by foreign powers: the only truly national regime would be that in which Libya would be part of a larger Arab empire including North Africa and the Middle East. The ideology of this school of thought from a different generation, to which King Idris had somehow to respond, was derived from Egyptian and Syrian pan-Arabism reorganized on a socialist basis as "a non-aligned force - in fact, a policy of positive neutralism - in foreign affairs." The most outspoken advocates of this school were the Ba'thist 'Resurrectionist' group who combined Pan-Arab ideas with socialist reforms and were opposed to any alignment

³⁵ H. D. Nelson (Ed), *Libya, A Country Study* (The American Univ., Washington, 1979), pp. 40-41.

with the West.³⁶ Conscious of these mounting pressures, the Idris government began considering foreign base evacuation as early as 1964.³⁷

The deteriorating situation in Cyprus by early 1964 was much graver and indeed desperate, although in the end British defence placements there survived, whereas in Libya they did not. Cyprus had become an independent republic on 16th August 1960. The provisions of the 1960 independence constitution were meant to ensure a unitary bicomunal government, with a Greek Cypriot President and a Turkish Cypriot Vice-President, assured 'ethnic' representation in terms of percentages in different spheres, and so on. There was moreover a tripartite agreement of guarantee involving Britain, Greece and Turkey. These provisions broke down completely between December 1963 and August 1964, necessitating British troops to move out of their sovereign military bases in Cyprus to provide a buffer between the warring communities. Although the Turks were on the receiving end, atrocities, including the killing of children, took place on both sides and there were some ghastly inter-ethnic massacres.

Sandys had to rush out to Nicosia just after the Malta talks in December 1963, but the turmoil continued with the real risk of a Graeco-Turkish war. On 1st January 1964 Archbishop Makarios announced that he had unilaterally abrogated the treaties of Alliance and Guarantee. On 18th February 1964, just as the chiefs of staff and

³⁶ M. Khadduri, *op.cit.*, pp. 330-331. Idris was the first and last King of Libya: the army he created deposed him in a *coup d'état* in 1969. According to the colonel who led it, Muammar Qathaafi, he and other members of the Free Officers Movement began in 1959 to study the Libyan situation within the context of the broader Arab situation. Their studies, influenced by Syrian Baathism and especially by Egyptian Nasserism, resulted in the decision to overthrow the Libyan monarchy and to install a revolutionary regime committed to freedom, socialism and unity.

³⁷ The issue became more important after the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967. British forces evacuation day (25th March) and American forces evacuation day (11th June) became national holidays in Libya. H. D. Nelson, *op.cit.*, p. 202.

the British defence ministry were scratching their heads about Malta's future in this *milieu*, British troops were evacuating Cypriot Turks from Vitsadha village after repeated Greek attacks. A conspicuous protagonist on the Greek Cypriot side in 1964 was the fanatic Nicos Sampson, a trained irregular: a decade later it was 'his' attempted *coup* which simply provoked a Turkish invasion. In August 1964, Turkish jets intervened to drop napalm on Greek villages, destroying a hospital. Events had been boiling up but it was mainly the insistence of Makarios to change thirteen points in the independence constitution, which was resisted by the Turkish Cypriot minority, that led to a passionate eruption of bloody street fighting of the worst kind. Sadly, that blew the lid off any pretence that Cyprus was a nation or even a unitary or a bicommunal state. Equally that put paid to the majority principle, as the Greek-Cypriots would have seen it. Could stability be restored soon? The Republic of Cyprus was a stitched affair: on Christmas Eve 1963 the stitches betrayed an open wound which showed no signs of healing. In the winter of 1964 Britain's future in Cyprus, after all the EOKA fighting before independence, looked more bleak and wobbly than ever.³⁸

It was with such occurrences on their minds that the chiefs of staff were wondering about Malta, Mediterranean security and NATO's

³⁸ On the 1963-1964 Cyprus crisis, see e.g. the period accounts by British historians, H. D. Purcell, *Cyprus* (Ernest Benn, London, 1969), esp. chap. 7, 'Cyprus since Independence', pp. 300-402; Robert Stephens, *Cyprus: A Place of Arms* (Pall Mall, London, 1966), esp. chap. 13-17, pp. 168-219; Cypriot accounts, such as Costas Kyrris, *History of Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1985), esp. pp. 373-405, part of which is aptly titled 'Vivere Pericolosamente'; Stavros Panteli, *The Making of Modern Cyprus*, (Interworld, London, 1990), esp. chap. 4, pp. 189-229; Halil Ibrahim Salih, *Cyprus: The Impact of Diverse Nationalism on a State* (Univ. of Alabama, 1978), which contains useful texts as documentary history in the appendices. For a legal-constitutional appraisal, see e.g. Thomas Erlich, *Cyprus 1958-1967* (OUP, 1974), esp. chap. 3, 'The Cypriot Government's decision in 1963 to propose revisions of the Zurich-London settlement', and chap. 4, 'The Turkish Government's decision in 1964 to bomb Cyprus'. For background see also Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-1959* (OUP, 1998).

southern flank. Malta itself did not appear too secure, hence all the contingency plans.³⁹

The Libyan Government had (so far) shown no intention of unilaterally abrogating the Anglo-Libyan Treaty or the Wheelus Agreement. Their main concern at that moment was to play for time. But they would need to make at least some apparent change for "presentational purposes". It was the bases that attracted popular criticism. This was directed more at the American base at Wheelus near Tripoli, which was very large and obvious, than against the R.A.F. airfield at El Adem. Large-scale training exercises in Libya were also beginning to draw criticism. The British had received "an indirect message" suggesting that military exercises planned for the immediate future might be postponed. The present British garrison in Libya was not an issue. Indeed its presence was still welcomed by the King and Government. The King had indicated that "it has never been as necessary as now."

Britain had already been committed to reviewing the Treaty, and the defence chiefs had no strong feelings as to when that review should take place. They need not object if the Libyans now wanted to bring it forward. It was clear that the Libyans wanted to discuss with them "some revision at least for presentational purposes." In order to decide what could be done to meet them, the Foreign Office intended soon to prepare a paper, in consultation with the Ministry of Defence, for circulation to the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (usually referred to by its acronym DOPC). Since it was the 'base' in Libya that was under criticism, the defence chiefs would see what they could do "to present this in a new light." At this stage there was no apparent threat to their overflying or to staging rights as such.

Admiral Holland-Martin, who had just relinquished his post as C-in-C, Mediterranean, said he would prefer to see "greater emphasis placed on our need to retain our present position in Malta", which

³⁹ On British fears of a *coup d'état* in Malta, see above, II, 14.

was "the keystone of our military presence in the Mediterranean". Britain had already lost much prestige in the area, which the then situation in Cyprus was doing nothing to regain. "If in turn we were to lose, or withdraw completely from Malta," Holland-Martin insisted, "then we should undoubtedly also lose Libya and cease to be a Mediterranean power." He doubted whether it would be possible to retain their present position in Malta for very long once the Island became independent, and

with this point in mind we should relax the pressure which we are now applying for the achievement of early independence. Opinion in Malta is hardening against early independence. It would be foolish not to take full advantage of this trend.⁴⁰

4 | Sir John Frewen, representing the First Sea Lord, emphasised the importance of aircraft carriers, which were flexible enough to be re-deployed from East of Suez. Unless Egypt was itself directly threatened, the Suez Canal would remain available for this purpose. Sir Charles Elworthy reiterated that Malta would be no substitute for Cyprus for many purposes.

It was felt that the main outcome of the situation in Libya was that whilst the King lived, Britain would not lose its over-flying and staging rights, and the garrison would still be welcome. There would probably be some erosion of Britain's position, particularly of their right to conduct large-scale exercises. There was now practically no chance of adhering to the original date of 31st May for Maltese independence, they held, and further "it appeared most unlikely that it could be achieved in 1964." Recent events had shown the questionable value of defence agreements negotiated with colonial territories at the time of independence. However, since Malta would, after independence, still be financially dependent on the UK, there were "grounds for hope" that in this case a defence agreement might

⁴⁰ 'Part I to COS.21st Meeting/64', f. 4, enc. Chief of Defence Staff/Minister, 25 Feb. 1964, 926/1873/48489.

be "a more lasting one." Although it was the present policy of Her Majesty's Government to grant independence to Malta as soon as negotiations could be satisfactorily completed, they concluded,

The increased importance of our defence requirements there should be taken into account in any policy re-examination. This point should be brought to the attention of the Minister in the covering minute. The more bases we gave up, the more important the remainder became, and the more our world position and the retention of the remainder became eroded.⁴¹

To further strengthen this line of argument, in a subsequent meeting in March 1964 the defence chiefs sought to impress upon the British government the increased strategic importance of Malta on the assumption that Britain would be denied the facilities she still enjoyed in both Libya and Cyprus.

"The situation in the Mediterranean has changed considerably over the past year," they began. Malta was due to become independent shortly and discussions on a Defence Treaty were taking place. Recent events in Cyprus and possible developments in Libya, that could affect British rights under the present Anglo-Libyan Treaty, might have "a profound effect on our position in the Mediterranean." It was therefore necessary to re-appraise the significance of Malta to British strategy. If the Cyprus base were no longer available, and facilities in Libya were curtailed or lost, Malta could meet British requirements to a large extent. In the case of total denial of facilities in Libya, however, the defence chiefs assumed that there would no longer be a requirement "to intervene in Libya's defence."

After considering intervention contingencies in Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, and elsewhere, without some or all of the facilities of Cyprus or Libya or both, they looked again at the use of Malta as a naval

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, f. 5.

forward operating base - now seen as a minimum requirement. As for using Malta for communications, the loss of Cyprus facilities would comprise the primary Army relay station to the Far East and an important R.A.F. relay station to El Adem, Aden and the Far East. These could to a limited extent be offset by increased dependence on communication facilities in Malta. That would entail providing a direct circuit from Malta to El Adem, if possible, and a new circuit from either Malta or El Adem to Aden. That would depend on Malta's use as a relay station; and the establishment in Malta of additional relay facilities between the UK, Bahrein and Aden. It might also be necessary to increase the scale of facilities in Malta to replace those facilities in Cyprus which were specifically required for contingency plans in the area. Related to all this was SIGINT: with Cyprus would go an irretrievable loss of intelligence through Britain's inability to obtain the then level of SIGINT or carry out special reconnaissance flights. SIGINT resources would have to be dispersed to other SIGINT sites in the Near and Middle East. Malta therefore had considerable potential value as a fallback position, and existing facilities there could be expanded to cover some of those then undertaken by Cyprus.

For stockpiles, especially the TUXEDO Stockpile, Malta was seen as "the only practicable Mediterranean alternative to Cyprus for the location of a stockpile" from which to support Britain's then commitment to intervene in Libya, whether on a UK or U.S.-U.K. basis, as well as for U.S.-U.K. plans for an intervention in the Lebanon and in Jordan. Cyprus holdings of reserves were based on the use of up to a brigade group, with certain supporting and administrative units, for intervention operations. Some surpluses and additional stores held were special to Cyprus projects, internal security or training requirements. The TUXEDO stockpile, which was being re-organized and updated, could be smaller than that planned for Cyprus mainly because aircraft could carry more on the U.K.-Malta journey than on the U.K.-Cyprus journey. A Malta stockpile would still have to contain some 1,500 vehicles, 1,000 or more tons of ammunition, some 500 tons of supplies, and 4,000 tons of stores. Without Cyprus, the projected Malta stockpile would be indispensable to British intervention in Libya, reinforcing the

existing garrison by infantry, tanks and supporting air forces. For interventions in Lebanon and in Jordan, the stockpile in Malta would take longer to move but could still be used. It would take some two years to build up a stockpile in Malta, by which time the Libyan commitment might have changed.

On the strength of these projections, the defence chiefs concluded that: "Malta could again become the focus of British military influence in the Mediterranean." Attention had already been drawn to the importance of preventing the Soviets from establishing bases in Malta: "If we left Cyprus and in due course Communist influence was established there, the importance of denying Malta to the Soviets would be greatly increased."

Although Malta was too far to the West to be considered as an alternative to Cyprus for an air base from which to provide nuclear support for CENTO; to ensure, until the TSR2 was in service, the necessary favourable air situation for national intervention operations to the East; or for use, even when the TSR2 was in service, as an air base in support of operations in Kuwait; nevertheless Malta could provide an important air base if Britain wished to support an American intervention operation in the Eastern Mediterranean or to mount a national intervention operation into Western Libya. Malta's importance as a staging post for long range aircraft would be increased if Libya staging rights were lost. Although Malta would no longer be required as a base for intervention operations in Libya if Libya abrogated the 1953 Treaty with Britain, she would still be needed for U.S.-U.K. intervention operations and as an air staging post. To the extent that Malta would provide support for an increased naval presence in the Mediterranean, that could in some degree compensate for the loss of Cyprus airfields; just as she could offset to a limited extent the loss of important communications and SIGINT facilities. Malta would be "the only practicable alternative for a stockpile in the Mediterranean and would thus become the main base for the mounting of operations in the Mediterranean." While for many purposes Malta would be no substitute for Cyprus, if British facilities in Cyprus were denied, Malta would be likely to become "the focus

of British military influence in the Mediterranean", thereby increasing the importance of British defence requirements there.⁴²

The British defence appraisal of Malta's strategic importance by mid-1964 was thus markedly different to what it had been just two years earlier. Before a definite date had been set for Malta's independence, the Ministry of Defence had viewed Malta as vitally important primarily as an airfield and communications centre. The Navy's requirements for forward operations facilities were not irreplaceable. The Army only needed to keep a garrison there for internal security purposes. To the Air Force, at least one British-controlled airfield in the Mediterranean was essential in order to provide staging between Britain and the Middle East for both strategic transport aircraft and V-bombers. The service wireless stations were essential to the Navy and, as an alternative to Cyprus, to the Army and Air Force. By January 1963, however, we already find the Ministry of Defence taking a slightly graver view of the possibility of Britain losing her defence facilities in Malta. They repeated Malta's importance for British air reinforcement, at least until the 1970s, as well as the cost and loss of efficiency in re-siting wireless communications elsewhere. They also emphasised the importance of denying Malta strategically to the Communists and that if Cyprus were not available the loss of special wireless facilities would be very serious indeed. By March 1964, British defence perceptions and assessments of Malta's importance had changed further, as may be seen from the above detailed projections in the light of developments in both Cyprus and Libya. Malta was now seen as quite possibly, once again, "the focus of British military influence in the Mediterranean".⁴³

⁴² *Ibid.*, ff. 5-8.

⁴³ See the top secret note for the Minister of State at the Colonial Office by A. P. Cumming-Bruce from the Defence and Intelligence Department, 12 June 1964, on the changing notions of Malta's strategic importance, 926/1873/48489.

Had *that* been the situation in the summer of 1962, it is not at all sure that Britain would have moved as willingly to consider Malta's demand for Independence, or been as stingy. It is almost certain that she would not, or at least not without staking an indispensable claim, as a *sine qua non*, for a sovereign military base area, as in Cyprus, or alternatively being more generous in the financial aid negotiations. Even now - still in time before any *fait accompli* - there was a resurgence of doubt as to the advisability of such a course of events, given changed British needs in the context of Mediterranean security. Two years may seem like a short time but as observed in the introductory remarks, in terms of historical 'duration', these were very long years; rudimentary transformations were under way. Only a few years earlier, such a thorough metamorphosis for a place like Malta would have been inconceivable. Much water had passed under the bridge since the first half of 1962. To apply the brakes, or to change from top to reverse gear at this stage, was problematical, unless... a justifiable pretext could be found for it. In the absence of a good excuse for somehow legitimizing such a round-about-turn, other precautions might have to be taken. So far, that is, as it was at all possible to insure or ensure anything once a British colony would have become an independent state - crossing the Rubicon and riding into the sunset. The question is: did such a pretext exist in the first months of 1964? Could such a justification for slowing down, or turning tail, be made out?

There was still the possibility of a disagreement serious enough to cause Borg Olivier's resignation, a threat he had made more than once, perhaps employing it as a bargaining ploy rather than fully meaning it. That reaction would have come as a boon to the sceptics and obstructors because in that eventuality - perhaps unknown to Borg Olivier - by March 1964 plans were afoot to have Malta revert back immediately to gubernatorial rule as in 1958, if necessary. In this context the main difference of opinion in London concerned the role, if any, that could still be assigned to Wakefield, because in a crown colony it was the governor alone who spoke for the Crown, not any 'commissioner', or he jointly with another UK representative. It also became clear, at this point, that some tension was building up between Wakefield and Dorman as these jockeyed

for position and status in Malta, with Wakefield trying to side-step Dorman, while the latter played his cards close to his chest. "If Dr Borg Olivier and his ministers were to resign and if, out of dudgeon, they declined to remain in office pending a General Election," Wakefield alerted London, "swift action would be needed." As the Malta (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) Order in Council for the governor to have the necessary powers to carry on the administration, would have to be brought into operation in two stages, first by Her Majesty and subsequently by proclamation in the Malta Government Gazette, it was suggested that, unless that had already been done, such an Order should be "made now and remain dormant." That would eliminate delay "at a time when it might be necessary for the Governor to act swiftly in appointing his Executive Council and, in the worst contingency, proclaiming an Emergency and making the Regulations connected therewith."⁴⁴ In fact, with the help of legal advisers such as Basil Smith, preliminary and precautionary steps had already been taken.⁴⁵

A draft Order in Council was prepared. The Maltese officials who would be appointed by the Governor to run the new colonial administration of Malta were earmarked, and their names communicated to London. Although there was some disagreement on this point, Dorman thought that Maltese civil servants could be relied upon to continue doing their work. If the senior official in each department were made a member of the executive council, "they would find no difficulty in accepting the appointments."⁴⁶ Recourse would be had to these Maltese civil service 'heads' to report to the British governor and to serve him as required by a re-deployed colonialist system. The administration would thus be entrusted to two

⁴⁴ Wakefield/Kisch, 29 Feb. 1964, sec., 926/1875.

⁴⁵ Kisch/Wakefield, 9 Sept. 1963, sec., 926/1875, enc. rev. draft of Order-in-Council. Ragonesi recalls that in 1963 Sandys had asked him "if they could not delay Independence by two years, there were so many problems". Ragonesi/Frendo, interviews, 1989, 1999.

⁴⁶ Wakefield/Eastwood, 14 Mar. 1964, sec., 926/1875.

officials appointed from what was then the Prime Minister's Office, the Hon. Edgar Cuschieri, C.B.E., and the Hon. Alfred Salomone, C.B.E. The highly-qualified attorney-general Prof. John J. Cremona would be appointed to the Ministry of Justice, together with six other officials. The other would-be members of Malta's executive power who were earmarked, each representing their respective departments or 'ministries' were these: Joseph M. Rossignaud (Labour, Emigration and Social Welfare); Major Victor J. Castillo (Agriculture and Fisheries); Salvino J. Mangion, O.B.E., an architect and civil engineer (Public Works); Chev. Joseph P. Vassallo, O.B.E. (Education); Salvino Mizzi (Industry); and Prof. Carmel Coleiro, a medical doctor (Health).⁴⁷ What this meant too was that Dorman was against the principle of "sending out officers from this country (Britain) as was done in 1959..."⁴⁸

In the absence of Maltese Cabinet Government, Wakefield thought it "essential" that the UK Commissioner's Office should remain in being. He was ill at ease with the draft Order-in-Council because it removed from the UK Commissioner "any legal status". Constitutionally it was difficult to justify the continuance of the UK Commissioner; certainly he could not retain the functions given to him by the present Constitution...⁴⁹ The C.O. staff were concerned that from the political and administrative point of view the prospect of two representatives each with access to the Secretary of State could lead to friction locally, and embarrassment to him (the Secretary of State). Sir Edward Wakefield's reasons did not appear to be compelling ones. There was concern too "that the views of the Governor on a matter of such importance have only been conveyed

⁴⁷ The list of administrators supposedly waiting in the wings to run the government as necessary - once Borg Olivier and his Cabinet would have resigned - was enclosed with Wakefield's despatch, and given in the 'hierarchical' order of priority indicated: Cuschieri, Salomone, Cremona, Rossignaud, Castillo, Mangion, Vassallo, Mizzi and Coleiro. Enc., *ibid*.

⁴⁸ Min., Kisch/Eastwood, 9 Mar.1964, 926/1875.

⁴⁹ Wakefield/Eastwood, 14 Mar. 1964, sec., para. 3.

to us in such a cursory fashion and at second-hand through the U.K. Commissioner." It was suggested that it might be "a wise precaution" when communicating with Sir Maurice Dorman to write 'Secret & Personal' to the Governor "for his eyes only..." The legal adviser A. R. Rushford was particularly dismissive of Wakefield's suggestion that the office of a UK Commissioner be retained once Malta would no longer be a self-governing colony:

In my view it would be quite inappropriate to retain any references to the U.K. Commissioner in the draft Order, since he would have no functions to perform. Any views H.M.G. might have would be communicated direct to the Governor, whose duty it would be of course to direct himself to H.M.G.'s interest. It is unusual enough to have a U.K. Commissioner in a colony with internal self-government - to have one in a colony that was under 'Crown Colony Government' would be absurd.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Min., A.R.R., 24 Mar. 1964; but see the various exchanges on this 'Dormant Order' and its consequences between Kisch, Martin, Eastwood, Crawley, Rushford, Fairclough and others during the month of March 1964, but these discussions go back to 1963 on 926/1875. Thus, for example, in Crawley to Fairclough, 26 Aug. 1963: "It is conceivable that there might be a breakdown in Government between now and independence although unlikely... we would presumably need to act speedily..." Again, in Fairclough to Cruchley and Kisch, 3 Apr. 1963: "The situation which was earlier envisaged, i.e. that the Constitution might never 'get off the ground' is clearly different from any situation in which now, more than a year after the introduction of the Constitution, we might be compelled to bring the dormant Order in Council into effect and resume direct rule. We would only do so with a situation of pretty desperate crisis when no conceivable alternative was in view. In these circumstances we should be bound to plan for a fairly lengthy period of direct rule in which case, as Mr Crawley says, there would be no functions for the U.K. Commissioner or his staff to perform. I am accordingly inclined to disagree with Sir E. Wakefield and if you agree I will draft accordingly." It was originally envisaged that if the Constitution never got off the ground, or was prematurely suspended, that the U.K. Commissioner's staff would provide "the superstructure for the new Administration, i.e. Mr Watt as Chief Secretary, Mr Hobden and Mr Smith taking on the administrative and legal functions... If this were still the intention and the U.K. Commissioner's post were kept in being he would be without senior staff..." Min., Crawley/Fairclough, 13 Mar. 1963, *ibid.*

More important for Malta was the assumption that, if Borg Olivier resigned, Malta in 1964 would immediately revert to crown colony rule, at least until such time as a general election could be held. What seemed to be at stake here was more than a temporary hiccup between one election and another, possibly on the assumption that there would be a 'repeat' of April 1958, or worse. Given the most peculiar 'snakes-and-ladders' colonial constitutional history of this Southern European fortress colony - her representative government granted in 1887 withdrawn in 1903, her internal-self-government granted in 1921 and again in 1932 suspended or withdrawn in 1930, in 1933 and again in 1958 - one more reversal in 1964 would have been singularly unoriginal. In an elaborate secret minute addressed to both Sandys and Lansdowne in mid-March, Sir John Martin stated as follows:

It is on the cards that Dr Borg Olivier might throw his hand in and that no other government could be formed to carry on till a general election. In that event it would be necessary to give the Governor powers to conduct the administration himself...

The Order would suspend the operation of certain parts of the Constitution... Executive and legislative power would then rest with the Governor. He would have an Executive Council of not less than five members (they were asking him whom he would appoint) and he would have to consult them but he would not have to follow their advice...

If Dr Borg Olivier resigns within the course of the next few days and refuses to carry on pending the appointment of a successor (irresponsible though this would be and inconsistent with the claim that Malta is qualified for independence), we will have to seek approval for the passage of the Order as a matter of urgency. If, while not immediately resigning, he indicates that he is likely to do so in the near future, we may have to arrange for the Order to be passed as a "Dormant Order", so that it can be brought into effect immediately if required.⁵¹

⁵¹ Min., J. M. Martin, 13 Mar. 1964, entitled 'Malta', sec., 926/1875.

The Minister of State saw Martin's minute, putting down his initial with a date but without any comment. Mr Sandys, on the other hand, wondered whether they wanted to proceed with this, "in view of the agreement reached with Dr B.O. on the next step."⁵²

Apart from the resignation card scenario, there was another possible and still more crucial turning-point which the doubters and the stoppers could tag on to; and didn't they try. That was the independence referendum, due to be held in early May 1964. If an inconclusive result could be somehow assured, that would justify giving pause to the rush into Independence for Malta, delaying it or postponing it outright. The Maltese people themselves would thus have democratically opted for a British change in policy by showing how unsure they really were of Independence, or hopelessly divided about it anyway. Nor is the real possibility of this behind-the-scenes alternative course for Malta one to be taken lightly and leisurely. The 'sceptics' - Maltese nationalists might have said the 'spoilers', had they known about it - were not just the heads of services, the chiefs of staff, the commanders-in-chief or their big chief Mountbatten, who knew Malta (and Mintoff) well enough.

The Minister of Defence, Mr Peter Thorneycroft, had become convinced that his defence chiefs were absolutely right. He, in turn, convinced his Prime Minister, that this was indeed so. The Malta independence project had better be stopped. Other influential personalities who had Douglas-Home's ear might well have contributed their share as well. The Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister of Great Britain made a formidable tandem, backed as they were by the defence forces. For Britain to go ahead with granting Malta independence was just not on - when Cyprus was blowing itself apart in a bellicose Aegean, Libya sliding proudly into the oil-rich sand, and Mintoff allegedly planning a 'Nasserite' *coup*. But what could now be done to rectify matters?

⁵² Min., Lansdowne, 13 Mar.; Min., Sandys, 14 Mar. 1964, *ibid*. See above, I, 8.

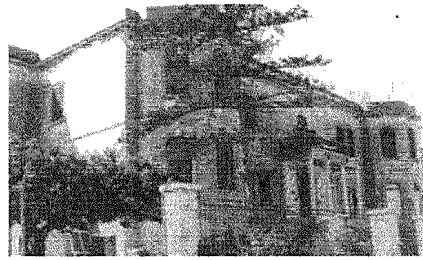
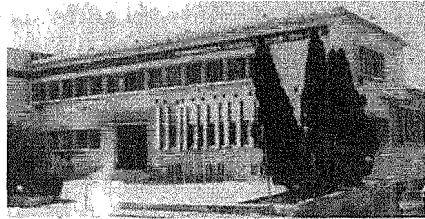
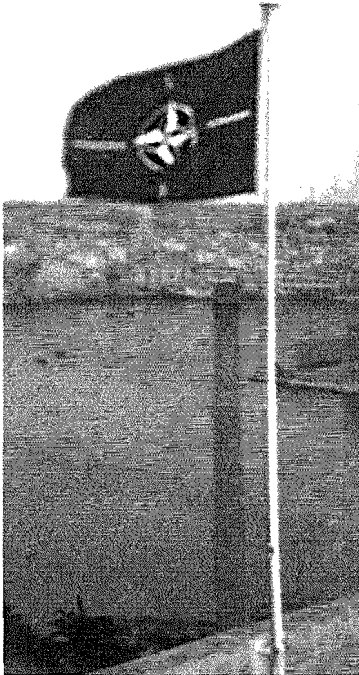
There was yet another consideration. NATO in general, and Italy in particular, were worried about Europe's southern flank. They were especially keen to know what was going on in Malta, when would Independence be given and how. Holland-Martin's successor as Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, was Admiral Sir John Hamilton. In a secret, personal and "for U.K.eyes only" report written at sea on board *H.M.S. Surprise* and addressed in hand to Mountbatten, Hamilton in March 1964 reported about important calls he had just made in Naples and in Rome. The C-in-C had met Italy's top brass including, among others, Mr Andreotti, the Minister of Defence; General Rossi, Chief of the Defence Staff; Admiral Giuriati, Chief of Staff, Italian Navy; General Aloja, Chief of Staff, Italian Army; General Remondino, Chief of Staff, Italian Air Force; and Admiral Pugliese from COMEDCENT together with his senior Staff Officers.

After complimenting the Italians for the utmost friendship and goodwill shown to him, which made him feel the respect with which they still regarded the Royal Navy - "surely a nice tribute to Deric Holland-Martin" - he quickly came to the point. He was "so struck" with the general theme of every conversation which took place on each of his calls, that he felt he should let the Admiral of the Fleet know about it:

It was very clear to me that all the senior Italian Service officers are anxious about their and N.A.T.O.'s southern flank. They see in the unsettled conditions along the whole North African coast a potential source of trouble and of possible enemy exploitation in the future. They see us facing the distinct possibility of losing our position in Cyprus and Libya. Inevitably they want to know - and did not hesitate to ask - "What will happen in Malta?"

Hamilton told them that he could not predict the outcome of a political issue but was very ready to agree with them on the *military* importance of Malta. He was "most struck" with the importance which they attached to this:

It was clear to me that, for lack of the customary strong British Naval presence in the Mediterranean, they feel their southern flank



NATO'S flag at HAFMED flies over the Grand Harbour. Other British companies were Redifussion, and Cable and Wireless.

to be insecure and, in the context of the growing uncertainties in North Africa, they do not like it.

Hamilton sensed the same attitude, though not so strongly expressed, in his discussions with Admiral Russell, CINCSOUTH, and Rear Admiral Masterton, DEPCOMSTRIKEFORSOUTH, at Naples. They both wanted to know what was to happen in Malta. Their interest was much more than curiosity:

In their case, however, I got the feeling, though they never put it into words, that their main concern was to ensure, for obvious military reasons, that the island never got into unfriendly hands. I sensed a kind of polite impatience with us for being so weak - disappointment, perhaps, would be a better word.

Knowing how hardstretched Britain was elsewhere, Hamilton was obviously not in a position to reassure "any of these good friends of ours" about our military position in the Mediterranean, though he would very much have liked to have done so. He copied his letter to the First Sea Lord and to the British ambassador in Rome.⁵³ On receiving it, Mountbatten shared its contents with the Minister of Defence as well as circulated it to the Chiefs of Staff. The Minister of Defence forwarded it to Downing Street for the Prime Minister's information.⁵⁴

The Foreign Office was also interesting itself keenly in the Malta question. They wanted to know how changes in Libya and Cyprus could impact on Malta. It was partly in response to this that the chiefs of staff asked the Defence Planning Staff to prepare a more specific paper for a meeting on 24th March 1964.⁵⁵ On that day, the whole matter was raised and discussed in the British Cabinet. There was general agreement with these views, hypothetical though they were. Cabinet concluded that there was increasing evidence that the Egyptian Government was intensifying its pressure

to compel us to evacuate our bases in the Mediterranean and the Middle East; and, if they succeeded in securing our eviction from the Libyan base of El Adem, our position would be seriously weakened... Meanwhile we should avoid any action which might endanger our strategic facilities in Malta.

In these circumstances they decided not to acquiesce in any unilateral denunciation of the Treaty by the Libyan Government, nor agree to take part in negotiations directed to its termination. Britain would confine herself to implementing their earlier undertaking to review the Treaty, since on that basis they could, if necessary, withdraw from

⁵³ Hamilton/Mountbatten, 16 Mar. 1964, 926/1873/48489.

⁵⁴ Hockadat/Wright, 1 Apr. 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489.

⁵⁵ Extract, Pt. I, COS 24th Mtg/64, Item 5, enc. 926/1873/48489.

Libya without prejudicing their legal entitlement to continue to overfly Libyan territory and, possibly, even to use the facilities at El Adem.⁵⁶ The way in which this Cabinet decision was minuted implies that by March 1964 Anglo-Libyan relations were already rather more strained than was being publicly admitted. The implication in fact is that Libya wanted not only to restrict but possibly to abrogate the 1953 Anglo-Libyan Treaty altogether, nearly a decade before it was due to expire. While the conservative King Idris and his entourage would have used some restraint in their diplomatic dealings, the writing was clearly on the wall.

In April 1964 the Minister of Defence, Peter Thorneycroft, wrote formally to the Prime Minister asking that the issue of Malta's independence be "shelved". He hoped that plans for Malta to become independent on 31st May would be "frustrated". Thorneycroft, who had left the army where he was an artillery officer to become a barrister before he entered parliament, had been Minister of Aviation before becoming Minister of Defence in 1962 and Secretary of State for Defence in 1964. In his two page letter, Thorneycroft pointed to the forthcoming Malta referendum as a possible *deus ex machina*:

I understand that on present plans Malta would achieve her independence on 31st May. It is my hope that these plans will be frustrated. The outcome of the referendum on the Independence Constitution which is to be held early next month may demonstrate that a postponement is desirable for political reasons but we cannot be sure of this.

Not trusting to such chance, the Minister made the military and security argument as strongly and as succinctly as he could: because of developments in Cyprus and Libya Malta's importance as a staging post for long-range aircraft would be enhanced and forward operating facilities for the Royal Navy would assume greater

⁵⁶ Extract, Cabinet Meeting CM (64) 20th, 24 Mar. 1964, enc. 926/1873/48489.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING, WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W. 1
TELEPHONE WHITEHALL 7532

SECRET

PRIME MINISTER

MALTA

I understand that on present plans Malta would achieve her independence on 31st May. It is my hope that these plans will be frustrated. The outcome of the referendum on the Independence Constitution which is to be held early next month may demonstrate that a postponement is desirable for political reasons but we cannot be sure of this.

2. Meanwhile developments in Cyprus and Libya cannot but weaken our position in both places. They could mean that Malta would become the only place in the Mediterranean east of Gibraltar where our forces had any prospect of security of tenure. While Malta could be no substitute for Cyprus and Libya, in a number of respects her importance as a staging post for long-range aircraft would be enhanced and the forward operating facilities for the Royal Navy would also assume greater importance. She would be the only practicable alternative for a stockpile in the Mediterranean and would thus become the main United Kingdom base for the mounting of operations in the Mediterranean whether these were purely national operations or in support of an American intervention.

3. Officials have made considerable progress with the negotiation of a defence agreement with Malta. This is satisfactory so far as it goes but it can at best provide only a limited guarantee of our continued presence in Malta after independence. It seems probable that we could count on the continued co-operation of the Nationalist Party should they remain in power. There is a distinct possibility that the Malta Labour Party would abrogate the agreement if they were to secure office after independence.

/s/



SECRET

-2-

4. I believe therefore that we should consider carefully in the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee whether there are not strong grounds for delaying the grant of independence to Malta or, if that is not possible, whether there are any measures open to us which would improve our chances of retaining the island as a base.

5. On the assumption that we can shelve the issue of independence, we must, I believe, be reasonably generous with our assistance to the island and show ourselves reasonably willing to make use of its military resources in order to re-establish a better relationship there for our defence requirements.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to our colleagues in the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and to Sir Burke Trend.

P.T.

17th April, 1964.

An exchange between the Defence Minister, Major Peter Thorneycroft, and his Prime Minister, in which both hoped against hope that the plans for Malta's independence would be frustrated.

importance; she would be the only practicable alternative for a stockpile in the Mediterranean and would thus become the main UK base for the mounting of operations in the Mediterranean whether these were purely national ones or in support of an American intervention. Officials, he noted, had made considerable progress with the negotiation of a defence agreement with Malta. This was satisfactory so far as it went but it could at best provide "only a limited guarantee of our continued presence in Malta after independence." It seemed probable that

we could count on the continued co-operation of the Nationalist Party should they remain in power. There is a distinct possibility that the Malta Labour Party would abrogate the agreement if they were to secure office after independence.


He believed therefore that they should consider carefully in the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee whether there were not strong grounds for "delaying the grant of independence to Malta", or, if that was not possible, whether there were "any measures open to us which would improve our chances of retaining the island as a base." He concluded thus:

On the assumption that we can shelve the issue of independence, we must, I believe, be reasonably generous with our assistance to the island and show ourselves reasonably willing to make use of its military resources in order to re-establish a better relationship there for our defence requirements.⁵⁷

Sir Alec readily obliged. In a type-written minute in reply from Downing Street only three days later, he agreed. "I hope the referendum will be completely indecisive", the Prime Minister wrote back, adding: "but if not, we will have to try and delay independence

⁵⁷ Thorneycroft/Douglas-Home, 17 Apr. 1964, sec., 926/1872/48489. Thorneycroft sent copies of his "minute", as he called it, to the members of the D.O.P.C. and to Sir Burke Trend.

Mr. Deane (to Mr.) CS. (B) Sir J. Maitland
 32
 SECRET S/STATE FOR DEFENCE Mr. Lushwood
 Mr. Lish

 10, DOWNING STREET,
 WHITEHALL.

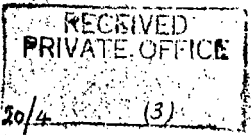
April 20, 1964.

COPY OF MINUTE BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

Reference: Minute from S/State for Defence
 (31) on Malta - dated 17.4.64.

"I agree with this. I hope
 the referendum will be completely
 indecisive, but if not, we will
 have to try and delay Independence
 again.

A. D.-H."


 20/4 (3)

Copy also sent to:
 Foreign Secretary,
 Ch/Exchequer
 Home Secretary
 Commonwealth Secretary
 Sir Burke Trend.

Douglas-Home agreed with his Defence Minister, pinning his hopes on a "completely indecisive" referendum result; otherwise they would have to try and delay Independence "again".

again." Douglas-Home copied his minute to the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, the Commonwealth Secretary and Sir Burke Trend (who was Secretary to Cabinet).⁵⁸

Duncan Sandys saw both Thorneycroft's and Douglas-Home's minutes. But, very significantly, he made no comment. "He has made no comment", a senior assistant commented in his own right. Meanwhile, the Cabinet Office were expressing interest in the possibility of a discussion on these issues in the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee. Mr M.M. Minogue, a Sandys aide, told Sir Burke Trend's private secretary that there was probably little point in a Ministerial discussion before the referendum which was being held from the 2nd to the 4th May; "and we were not yet in a position to express views on the delaying of independence." Should it be thought desirable to discuss this in D.O.P.C. "before the referendum", a possible date could be 29th April if the colonial secretary agreed. In Mr Minogue's words to Sir John Martin, however: "As the Secretary of State has not commented on this correspondence I propose, if you agree, not to pursue the matter further unless there is a positive approach by the Cabinet Office."⁵⁹ Martin did not think there would be any advantage in expediting discussion of the position in the D.O.P.C., but felt some discussion (before the referendum) could be useful so that Sandys would have the background of his colleagues' views when considering its results. He added:

It is pretty clear that H.M.G. will not have much difficulty in declaring that the vote in the referendum has not given sufficiently clear support for proceeding with independence now.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Min., Douglas-Home/Thorneycroft, 20 Apr. 1964, sec., 926/1872/48489.

⁵⁹ Min., Minogue/Martin, 21 Apr. 1964, 926/1872/48489.

⁶⁰ Min., Martin/Fairclough, 22 Apr. 1964, 926/1872/48489.

Cabinet Office however decided to defer any further consideration until after the referendum.⁶¹

While Dr Borg Olivier was being criticised for asking electors about the Constitution not about Independence, it was in fact Malta's Independence, rather than her Constitution, which was hanging in the balance, in that all-important referendum vote. And Borg Olivier must surely have sensed it. This turn of events further underlines what could have been behind that fateful meeting between Sir Edward Wakefield and Archbishop Michael Gonzi - when, after the former had explained to him the implications of an inconclusive referendum result, the latter had given him a guarantee that he would definitely not be advising the faithful to vote 'yes'. Wakefield had promptly and triumphantly cabled London about it.⁶² Might that not have been a Phryric victory?⁶³

Another question that now suggests itself is whether Borg Olivier felt or knew that in certain corridors of power a momentum against Independence was building up, not so much in Malta as in Britain. By the time that he decided to hold the referendum, it was clear that Britain was facing difficulties in Cyprus and Libya; it did not take a wizard to guess that Malta's military importance could be seen to

⁶¹ Min., Kisch/Martin, 22 Apr. 1964; Martin/Eastwood, 29 Apr. 1964; Eastwood/Kisch, 5 May 1964; 926/1872/48489. The meeting of 29th April did not in fact discuss Malta at all.

⁶² On the Wakefield-Gonzi meeting and the referendum campaign, see above, I, 9.

⁶³ The logical sequence need not necessarily have been one of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, i.e.: no advice to vote "yes" so that the result would be inconclusive, as desired. There were other variables, as already discussed above; but the Wakefield posture may now be seen in the light of the positions being taken by the likes of Holland-Martin, Mountbatten, Thorneycroft and Douglas-Home. It is not unlikely that Gonzi would have known of such undercurrents as well - and he was no great fan either of independence or of Borg Olivier; but he had other considerations, ecclesiastical and political, which would have swayed him not to be obtrusive on this occasion. See above, I, 9.

grow. Although neither would have known then what exactly was going on behind closed doors, Mintoff mentioned setbacks for Britain in Mediterranean politics publicly; he paraded these as bargaining chips. Others saw such developments as approaching dark clouds, more danger looming ahead for an independent Malta in the neighbourhood - much closer to home now than Ghana or Cuba, British Guiana or Zanzibar. Had there been a straight 'yes' or 'no' question on Independence, with the MLP and the 'church' parties in a strategic anti-Nationalist alliance, they would have played into the hands of those who were increasingly reluctant to let go of Malta, those who were waiting and wishing for a demonstrably inconclusive result. Malta would not have become independent in 1964.

Admiral Holland-Martin for one believed and argued that the Maltese anti-independence lobby was hardening. Unknown to him, that was probably a combination of three factors: wishful thinking; undue reliance on *The Times of Malta*; and the clever political twist in Borg Olivier's referendum question, made to measure up to Malta's agitated multi-party context. As it happened, the MLP voted "no" to the Constitution, not to Independence. A direct vote on "independence now or not", as suggested by the 'church' parties, and at one point by Sandys, could well have had Borg Olivier hoist by his own petard. That was a suicidal urge Borg Olivier did not have.

As late as the last week of May 1964, the premise that independence for Malta could, or would, be delayed, or postponed, recurs. "The 31st May is no longer a feasible target date", minuted Jenkins to Cummings-Bruce on 19th May. "The choice now is between granting independence as soon as the necessary steps... can be completed - probably not before July - or deferring independence indefinitely." The necessary steps referred to were local endorsement of any changes on which the British government might insist in the Constitution, the passing by parliament of an Independence Bill, etc. His understanding was that

both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence now accept that it would not be politic to withdraw the offer of independence and that, provided the Malta Government

35 DP. 66/64(1) Draft ref (52a)(26)(9) - 13.5.64
 Destroyed See (4)
 M. Cumming-Bruce (through T. Kitch)

I agree that we can accept the substance of (35) but I am not altogether happy about the introductory paragraphs on which I would make the following comments:-

(1) the 31st May is no longer a feasible target date. The choice now is between granting independence as soon as the necessary steps (eg. local endorsement of any changes on which the British Govt may insist in the Constitution, passing by Parliament of an independence bill etc) can be completed - probably not before July - or deferring independence indefinitely.

(2) My understanding is that both the PM and the British Govt have agreed that it would not be politic to withdraw the offer of independence and that, provided the Malta Govt agree to certain changes in their draft Constitution and satisfactory defence arrangements can be made (to safeguard our defence interests after independence, this should be granted.

(3) Greater military use of Malta is something we should like to see decided at the independence conference, and would be an important factor in reaching satisfactory arrangements with the Govt of Malta.

Yes, over taken by DOPC meeting of 14th May 1964
 MK

This Jenkins/Cumming-Bruce minute of 19th May 1964, after the referendum, still wondered if the offer of Independence might be deferred indefinitely or withdrawn, but the Defence Oversea Policy Committee had decided otherwise just a few days earlier, at their high level meeting of 14th May. Prodded by Sandys, among others, Douglas-Home and Thorneycroft had come round to the view that Independence could be given to Malta provided that there would be a Defence Agreement tied to a Financial Agreement by way of a surety - and provided further that nuclear weapons would not be barred, however secretive their use. See below, III, 16.

agree to certain changes in their draft Constitution and satisfactory arrangements can be made to safeguard our defence interests after independence, this should be granted. Greater military use of Malta is something we should like to see whether or not independence comes soon, and would be an important factor in reaching satisfactory arrangements with the Government of a newly independent Malta.⁶⁴

In another exchange at this time, in preparation for a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on the following day, three paragraphs were re-drafted "to make the study apply to the future without regard to whether independence is delayed - the earlier version only considered an increase in military presence as a sweetener if independence were denied to Malta for an indefinite time to suit our defence requirements."⁶⁵

This line of reasoning was overtaken by a decision reached during a meeting of the top level Defence and Oversea Policy Committee held on 14th May 1964, during which Douglas-Home and Thorneycroft rather came round to the view advocated by Sandys that at this juncture it would be impolitic to withdraw the offer of Independence but that, in the circumstances, British defence interests should be as well secured as possible.⁶⁶

However, on 26th May, Moutbatten was still addressing his Chiefs of Staff on "the extent to which greater use could be made of the defence facilities in Malta should independence be delayed." However, he continued by saying that the Defence and Oversea

⁶⁴ Min., Jenkins/Cumming Bruce, 19 May 1964, 926/1873/48489. At least two substantive documents in this discussion, probably relating to defence considerations or negotiations, are indicated as 'Destroyed'.

⁶⁵ Min., Cumming Bruce/Higham, Kisch, 25 May 1964, 926/1873/48489.

⁶⁶ See the margin minute by Kisch on (b) in Jenkins/Cumming Bruce, 19 May 1964, *ibid.* This was confirmed by Cabinet. See below, III, 16.

Policy Committee had also recently considered Malta and had agreed that further consideration should be given to the possibility of linking a future defence agreement with financial aid to Malta. At this D.O.P.C. meeting, Mountbatten had stated that, in his opinion,

Dr Borg Olivier could only remain in power with the support of the Church, and it was inevitable that Mr Mintoff would eventually come to power. Mintoff was likely to abrogate any defence agreement which had been negotiated by H. M. Government with Dr Borg Olivier.

The discussion continued on familiar lines, with the retention and upgrading of Hal Far airfield in support of Luqa now being considered to replace the airfields of El Adem in Libya and/or of Akrotiri in Cyprus if and when Britain lost them. Hal Far could also serve as a training airfield to replace the facilities then used at Idris airfield which, it had been agreed, could be given up as part of the forthcoming negotiations with the Libyans. Sir Richard Hull foresaw a further possible increase in Malta as being not just that of an infantry battalion but an armoured reconnaissance regiment: he objected to the words "one infantry battalion" as too restrictive. It would be practicable for a number of contingencies to have a unit in Malta as the Strategic Reserve spearhead unit. The garrison of Malta had been reduced by one major unit, it had subsequently risen again to two major units and there was now the possibility of a third major unit being stationed in the island.

For the Colonial Office, Mr A. P. Cumming-Bruce said that he had "heard" that there was a possibility that the Maltese Defence Agreement might not be linked to financial assistance for the island. Both Dr Borg Olivier and the Treasury were opposed to the linkage.

Whatever the exact terms of the Defence Agreement being worked out would be finally, there can be no doubt at all that by now Britain was truly anxious lest Malta would be lost. This state of mind was expressed brazenly enough by Sir David Luce who, partly echoing Mountbatten, wanted a new paragraph inserted into the report by the Chiefs of Staff to the Minister of Defence. In fact, his suggestion

featured as one of the main recommendations of the meeting. This new paragraph would draw attention to the fact that

Mintoff, if he came to power, was likely to abrogate any defence agreement between the present Maltese Government and Her Majesty's Government and that there was, therefore, a risk to our whole defence position unless by some means we could ensure that Mintoff could neither seize power, nor, if elected constitutionally, abrogate any defence agreement.

Such a view was pretty ominous. What it presumed and desired, really, was that Malta should not be granted independence at all. Not, at least, so long as the likes of Mintoff were lurking around. In military circles, the terminology "by some means" was a loaded one. Would a secret agent be detailed to do a job on Mintoff? Love him or hate him, until 1964 not a single Maltese politician had exercised Mintoff's voter pull over so long a span, since the introduction of universal suffrage in Malta in 1947. What Luce was saying in fact was more directed at preventing Mintoff from seizing power, presumably unconstitutionally, although that he did not dwell on. If so, he was simply reaffirming the need for vigilance and preparedness to prevent a *coup d'état*, which was being well taken care of already. While seeking to deter a *coup* by the Mintoff diehards, were other elements bent on a pre-emptive strike of their own? As has already been argued, an attempted *coup* before independence and a successful *coup* after it, were quite different phenomena. Luce's next presumption, which probably expressed what many others in his train and station then felt, was also open to question. How would Britain prevent a constitutionally elected government, be it led by Mintoff or someone else, from abrogating an agreement if such a government thought it fit to do so? There were ways of doing that, for example by Britain retaining sovereign rights over her Malta base, thereby being entitled to wage war against all comers in the defence of it - even an Anglo-Maltese War! That was military not civilian thinking - Malta knew a thing or two about it. Furthermore, would a Maltese government accept such a sovereign base area, in return for 'independence' in the rest of the Island?

TOP SECRET

38

(TS) MED 86/5106

PART I to COS 38th Meeting/64. 26 MAY 1964

INCREASED USE OF MALTA

TOP SECRET

DP 66/64 (Final)

SPECIAL CARE
28 MAY 1964

LORD MOUNTBATTEN said that on the 22nd April 1964, the Defence Council (1) had considered the implications of granting independence to Malta in the light of developments in Cyprus and Libya, and had agreed that an examination should be carried out of the extent to which greater use could be made of the defence facilities in Malta should independence be delayed. The Defence and Overseas Policy Committee had also recently considered Malta (2) and had agreed that further consideration should be given to the possibility of linking a future defence agreement with financial aid to Malta. At this meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee he had stated, that in his opinion, Dr Borg Olivier could only remain in power with the support of the Church, and it was inevitable that Mr Mintoff would eventually come to power. Mintoff was likely to abrogate any defence agreement which had been negotiated by HM Government with Dr Borg Olivier.

SIR RICHARD HULL said that he had two amendments which he wished made to the report. First, the report throughout referred to the possibility of increasing the garrison by one infantry battalion. He would rather the term "by one major unit" be used. The reason for this was that under certain circumstances it might be preferable to have as the third unit in Malta, an armoured reconnaissance regiment and the words "one infantry battalion" might prove too restrictive. The second point was that if a third unit was stationed in Malta it would have to be considered as part of the United Kingdom Strategic Reserve and not just as a reserve for the Mediterranean. It would be practicable for a number of contingencies to have a unit in Malta as the Strategic Reserve spearhead unit. A further point he wished to raise was that in his view attempts through defence means to assist the economy of Malta was not a good use of defence money. During his period as a member of the Committee, the garrison of Malta had been reduced to one major unit, it had subsequently risen again to two major units and there was now the possibility of a third major unit being stationed in the island. To run down a garrison and then subsequently build it up again, was extremely expensive, particularly when the only real benefit that would accrue to the Maltese from increasing the garrison would be the money spent in Malta by the troops and their families.

SIR DAVID LUCE said that he was of the opinion that a new paragraph 8 should be inserted in the report, drawing attention to the fact that Mintoff, if he came to power was likely to abrogate any defence agreement between the present Maltese Government and Her Majesty's Government and that there was, therefore, a risk to our whole defence position unless by some means we could ensure that Mintoff could neither seize power, nor, if elected constitutionally, abrogate any defence agreement.

Notes:

1. DG/M(64)3.
2. DO(64) 23rd Meeting, Item 3.

Security in Malta and the Mediterranean, especially if Mintoff were to be returned to power, continued to preoccupy the Defence Chiefs of Staff, including Mountbatten, right until Independence Day.

TOP SECRET

42

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS OFFICE

DOWNING STREET

LONDON S.W.1

Whitehall 1311
Ext. 206

Your reference

Please quote in reply: 2-MED 706/51/7

4th June, 1964

(38)

*My dear Sir,*Malta - COS 38th Meeting, Annex B to Minute 2

We have been looking at the above quoted COS minutes and associated papers. The piece which has struck us is paragraph 7 of Annex B to Minute 2, particularly the words "However, there is every reason to think that any defence treaty between the present Maltese Government and H.M.G. would be annulled by a Maltese Labour Government. Thus our whole defence position in Malta would be at risk unless by some means we can secure that Mintoff could neither seize power nor, if elected constitutionally, abrogate such a defence agreement".

2. We should be extremely grateful for the Colonial Office views on this and similar thoughts. It is common form that once a territory is independent we have no further means of compelling them to keep agreements, or preventing them from changing their government. We have gained the impression that, in the case of Malta, the fundamental policy is for us to favour Borg Olivier and his Government to the greatest possible extent, in both the political and financial fields; and that in the light of this it is a nuisance that we have to dispute with him about more sacred aspects of the Independence Constitution.

3. My object in asking you for comment on this passage is, of course, that we do not want to become inheritors in Malta of a Zanzibarian situation!

4. I am sending a copy of this letter to F.J. Burscoe, Ministry of Defence.

Yours,
J.C. Morgan
(J.C. Morgan)
Mediterranean Department.

J. Kisch, Esq.
Colonial Office.

SPECIAL CASE
- 5 JUN 1964
1

TOP SECRET

Once Malta became independent, there was no way of stopping Mintoff from coming to power. How could one insure against that? The understanding in Whitehall was that with a Borg Olivier administration a pact would be reliable, hopefully for the duration of it (until 1974). Mintoff, it was felt, would abrogate it.

The Commonwealth Relations Office found this passage in the C.O.S. minutes perturbing.⁶⁷ They wrote from Downing Street to find out what exactly it did mean and entail:

We should be extremely grateful for the Colonial Office views on this and similar thoughts. It is common form that once a territory is independent we have no further means of compelling them to keep agreements, or preventing them from changing their government...⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Min. 2, para. 7, Annex B, COS 38th/1964.

⁶⁸ Morgan/Kisch, 4 June 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489.

PART III

INDEPENDENCE

Clinching a Deal

DEFENCE, FINANCE AND DELIVERANCE

On 19th May 1964, two weeks after the referendum result was announced, the Maltese Prime Minister left for London. He encamped at the Savoy Hotel in The Strand in London's West End, determined not to return home before the Malta independence question would have been settled. In fact, he stayed put there, at the 'Malta headquarters' in London - for nearly ten weeks. Only after the British House of Commons had finally approved the Malta Independence Bill in its last session before dissolution, and with a new date for Independence tucked away in his pocket, did Borg Olivier return to Malta on 26th July. It was *not* a holiday. Although, for various reasons, not much was heard in Malta about developments in the Anglo-Maltese talks in London, some vitally important questions were being lobbied and decided during those exasperating two months between the referendum result and Borg Olivier's return. The referendum was the last main hope of those opposed to Independence for Malta; until mid-May independence was still in the balance. After that, until mid-July, the main questions concerned defence, finance - and a spiritual deliverance from the stalemate over the religious clauses which had been inserted into the

draft Constitution a year earlier and which were as inadmissible to the British side as they were to the Malta Labour Party - and indeed the Holy See.¹ There was no way in which the British government would submit, or the British parliament approve, exemptions which placed the Roman Catholic Church above the human rights provisions of an independence constitution, more so when her 'spiritual' sanction was still permissible under the long-standing electoral law of Malta; yet there was a little more to it than that.

Getting that Malta Independence Bill through parliament seemed like the last major hurdle. Apart from one or two surprises yet to come, there was still some tough bargaining over unresolved disputes in matters of defence and finance. Some delicate and crucial stances had to be thrashed out and then worded precisely. All told, Borg Olivier's prolonged stay in London was less capricious than it may have seemed, the more so as pressures from different directions were making themselves felt on the defence front, while the Treasury were dragging their feet over money, as usual. The British parliament's impending dissolution before the end of July for a general election in October hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of both administrations.

In Malta, Borg Olivier could count on ministers Felice and Caruana to hold the fort, and on de Gray in case of any trouble, as well as on the absolute loyalty of his other ministers. In any case, nothing was or had ever been more important for Borg Olivier now than to clinch a deal with the British and get Independence for his country after centuries of subjection to one dominator or another. As he saw and presented it, and as noted in the House of Commons, he had a majority of the votes cast in the referendum in favour of the proposed constitution (54.5%); he also had a majority (50.7%) of all the valid and invalid votes cast.² It was most unlikely that Borg Olivier would

¹ On this, see above, II, 12, and below, p. 563 *et seq.*

² Nearly 60% had either not voted at all, voted against or else cast blank or spoiled ballots. On the referendum see above.

risk jeopardizing Independence because of two religious clauses which, as he had already confided to Sandys, he had only accepted to put in as a counter-weight to Mintoff's points (and that, it seems, at the prompting of two ecclesiastics who had gone to London with episcopal *beneplacitu* in July 1963 to advise the 'loyal' politicians.)³

Much spade work had already been done over the past year, for instance over land sites to be transferred. Basic understandings had already been reached, not least that there would be agreements on defence and finance determined upon before Independence. In Malta, the stands and styles of the respective parties were by now nauseatingly familiar to London and everybody, or so they seemed. No sooner had the referendum result been published that Mintoff cabled Sandys to say that if the MLP did not hear from him they would take it to mean that he did not want to consult (further) with them, and so they would discuss Malta's future with other countries who were interested. Mintoff knew that he had Moscow on his travel agenda but tried to batter Sandys with that for the favour of another meeting, or to make it seem as if the blame for overtures to Russia lay with the British government. With characteristic ire, Mintoff concluded his telegram by stressing that if the MLP's demands were not met the party would in no way recognize a constitution framed by Sandys on his own and that if such an imposed constitution gave power to a government "dominated by priests", the MLP would strive by every means to demolish it.⁴ The small parties cabled to say that they were still ready to go up to London for further discussions, and Pellegrini actually did go, alone and uninvited, for a few days which changed nothing.⁵ By now, time was short. It was obviously intended that, in the nature of things, the concluding

³ On this see above, I, ?10; II, 12.

⁴ "... *il-Partit Laburista jhabrek u jistinka biex juza l-mezzi kollha halli jfarrak il-kostituzzjoni.*" Mintoff/Sandys tel., 6 May 1964, reproduced in *Il-Helsien*, 20 May 1964; the MLP were still insisting on immediate constitutional changes by Order-in-Council and fresh elections under UN supervision.

⁵ See e.g. the report in *Il-Torċa*, 31 May 1964.

decisions should be inter-governmental or - in the last resort if inter-governmental disagreement prevailed - legislative and by *fiat*.

On the constitutional front, one lingering bone of contention had to do with any laws inconsistent with the independence constitution. Section 6 of this constitution, which was not being in any way entrenched, laid down the general rule that the constitution prevailed over any other law that was inconsistent with it, and that the other law should, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void. This provision, which held the constitution to be the supreme law but which was not itself entrenched, was subject to two provisions in section 48 concerning time frames of inconsistency for certain categories of laws in so far as fundamental rights were concerned. When a colony became independent it was not unreasonable that there should be some degree of immunity from existing laws. In the case of Trinidad and Jamaica, all existing laws had been made immune from challenge. In the case of Malta, the exemption finally agreed upon was less wide. The five laws in the First Schedule (to the Constitution) were exempted altogether but the remainder only for three years.⁶

As a country with a very long history, Malta had had a large body of legislation, so it was felt that a short period of immunity was required during which this legislation could be properly examined and any amendments made to it, which were found necessary to bring it into conformity with the human rights provisions. After three years it

⁶ The five laws in the First Schedule, to which section 48(7) referred, were the Criminal Code, the Code of Police Laws, the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure, the Commercial Code, and the Civil Code. Section 48(8) precluded the award of compensation in respect of anything done under a provision of an existing law before the provision was held to be inconsistent with the Constitution. Enc., 'Laws inconsistent with Constitution', 926/1916/48583. Borg Olivier's delegation would have preferred one year instead of three years to avoid litigiousness. As for section 6 of the Constitution, in an interview with this writer, its drafter, Prof. J. J. Cremona, regarded constitutional supremacy as a 'super-norm' which did not require entrenchment because, he said, you could not insure against all risks. H. Frendo, *Malta's Quest for Independence: Reflections on the Course of Maltese History* (1989), p. 255. Others were less sure, suspecting that this may have been a loophole or an act of inter-party connivance.

would be fully open to challenge. The five laws exempted from challenge were basic to the whole legal system, all passed during the period of British sovereignty, two of the codes having been promulgated by Order-in-Council. There was no reason to suppose that there was anything in them which contravened the human rights code in any material way but it seemed reasonable to give them exemption as a precaution. The people of Malta were well known for their love of country and they had "many ingenious lawyers in Malta", some of whom might well devote their ingenuity to finding "technical points of inconsistency." The Malta Government naturally was anxious that there should be no uncertainty about so basic a part of the law under which the people of Malta had been living for so many years.⁷ Until the end of August 1964, Sandys and Borg Olivier were still exchanging correspondence on legalistic constitutional matters relating to the validation of laws.⁸

Of much greater import was the still unresolved church question. The 'offending' clauses were the two subsections (10) and (11) bearing on the chapter on human rights. These stated that nothing done by the

⁷ See the draft reply prepared in answer to a question as to why nothing in the laws set out in the First Schedule was to be held to be inconsistent with the chapter on fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the minuted exchanges during June and July, esp. Gordon-Smith/Eastwood, 26 June 1964; Jenkins/Kisch, 1 July 1964; 926/1923.

⁸ "I greatly regret your unwillingness to accept the inclusion in the Independence Constitution of the substance of Section 13(2) of the 1961 Constitution. But, as I said to you in my letter of 19th August, I do not propose to press this matter further... I would have preferred that no reference should be made to the validation of laws which were inconsistent with the 1961 Constitution. But, after consultation with my legal advisers, I feel obliged to accept your argument that the absence of some provision on this point might be deemed to stultify the object of Section 48(7) and (8) of the Independence Constitution. I have, therefore, for this reason, decided to incorporate the provision set out...with two small drafting amendments..." Sandys/Borg Olivier in tel., Sandys/Wakefield, 28 Aug. 1964, conf., replying to Borg Olivier/Sandys, 24 Aug. 1964; 926/1923. Much of this detailed and sometimes hair-splitting argumentation is outside the scope of this book; it would lend itself to a strict study of Maltese legal and constitutional history. See J. J. Cremona, *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History since 1813* (PEG, Malta, 1994; 2nd ed., 1997).

church “in the exercise of its spiritual powers” would be held to be in contravention of any of this chapter’s provisions; and that “nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law for the protection of the Religion of Malta” should be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of any of this chapter’s provisions. When pressed, and realising that Vatican diplomacy was under-cutting his position (which had been pledged to respect the wishes of the Maltese episcopacy), Borg Olivier conceded to have the two ‘offending’ clauses be removed. Instead, he agreed to a sub-clause in article 2 of the draft constitution, which was laboriously chiselled out, largely ensuring the *status quo*. The State thereby guaranteed to the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church “the right freely to exercise her proper spiritual and ecclesiastical functions and duties and to manage her own affairs.” This was felt to be “a more appropriate provision than that proposed in Section 48 (10) and (11) of the Malta Government’s draft.” And it did not entrench the Canon Law.

There was a presumed, if vague, qualification written into the clause by the use of the adjective “proper” before “spiritual”, suggesting subtly that there should be no resort to “improper” spiritual or ecclesiastical functions. If so, that was more of a sop, in the light of the interdicts and mortal sins, bell ringing during political meetings and such other sanctions or obstructive behaviour as had been so bitterly complained of by the MLP. In fact, the use of the qualification “proper” could just as well be read the other way round, depending on what definition and interpretation was attributed to it by which side.

In addition, however, a general non-discrimination clause was inserted as Section 46. This was a standard form and followed precedents of many other constitutions for independence. According to this new section, no law would make “any provision” that was “discriminatory either of itself or in its effect”. Moreover, no person would be treated in a discriminatory manner “by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority.” Discriminatory behaviour was itself defined to mean “affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly

to their respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed" on arbitrary grounds. Sub-sections (10) and (11) of section 48 were deleted.

Although the Apostolic Nuncio in London, Mgr Cardinale, prided himself on having convinced Borg Olivier the point that "exceptions in human rights clauses could, if inserted in the Constitution, easily be used by the next Labour Government against their political opponents,"⁹ a not less compelling reason surely was a blockage of the Malta Independence Bill which, in the absence of any compromise or face-saving solution, was quite possible.

Borg Olivier however held firm against British insistence that, through the Independence constitution, Malta's long-standing electoral law be changed. In an introduction to the draft White Paper prepared by the Colonial Office, it was further proposed that the draft Order to be submitted to Her Majesty in Council should include provision:

- (a) amending the provision in the Maltese Electoral (Polling) Ordinance relating to undue influence, to make it an offence to inflict or threaten to inflict any injury, damage, harm or loss of any kind to induce a person to vote or refrain from voting; and
- (b) amending that Ordinance so as to introduce a provision similar to that in the U.K. law whereby the election of a candidate should be declared void if corrupt or illegal practices have so extensively prevailed that they may reasonably be supposed to have affected the result of the election.

Borg Olivier's stand was that such a law had been on the statute book for decades and nobody had bothered to change it, neither the Labour administrations in Malta nor the British colonial administrations: why

⁹ A. Koster, *op.cit.*, p. 203; but see above, I, 10.

should he accept that it be changed now that Malta was becoming independent? On a party political level, any such change would have been comforting to Mintoff at Borg Olivier's expense, rendering him and his party unpopular with the church. It would have just about negated the clause now to be entered under section 2 guaranteeing to the church the right "freely to exercise her proper spiritual and ecclesiastical functions", particularly if the church felt that occasion demanded that she speak out or apply moral or ecclesiastical sanctions (which after all was the situation in Malta right then). For Borg Olivier to accept these further changes, on top of the others, would have been tantamount to a censure of the church's rights as exercised. Politically, he and his party stood to gain nothing at all. On the contrary, they might have risked losing respect as sell-outs to British secularism and laicism, betraying the religious strain which had for so long been a moulding and distinctive feature of Maltese anti-colonial nationalism in a Protestant-ruled colony. It is therefore no wonder that Borg Olivier held firm in spite of the repeated and insistent advances by Sandys, who had different interests to attend to and was little prone to "hellfire and brimstone". Some of the futile attempts made by Sandys in this regard have been recalled by a witness to the last phase of the talks, then the Commissioner of Land in Malta:

Borg Olivier was a hard nut to crack; and Sandys was showing signs of impatience. On another occasion he rose from the negotiating table and, addressing Borg Olivier, said: "Prime Minister, I'll give you time to consider the matter and give me an answer"; and went to sit at his desk. The rest of the delegations remained at the table. After about half an hour Sandys returned to the negotiating table and asked Borg Olivier: "Prime Minister, may I now have an answer?" All he got from Borg Olivier, however, was a grunt followed by dead silence; and the meeting broke up.¹⁰

¹⁰ E. Mizzi, *Malta in the Making 1962-1987; An Eyewitness Account* (Valletta, 1995), p. 36. On earlier discussions of Malta's electoral law, see esp. above I, 7-8.

Sandys did not give up and called further meetings, including one when Borg Olivier had a bad cold, which contrary to what Sandys imagined, was *not* a 'diplomatic' cold. The Gondoliers Suite was booked by the British Government at the Savoy Hotel, where Borg Olivier and his delegation were staying, for this meeting. After drinks which lasted a good half-hour, they took their place at the table:

Sandys put a simple and direct question to Borg Olivier. "Prime Minister", he said, "are you now in a position to state whether you will accept the changes in the draft Constitution which I have proposed to you?" Borg Olivier's reply came very quickly, and was even more to the point. "Yes, Secretary of State", he said, "my answer is no." Sandys stood up and left the room, followed by his delegation. The meeting had lasted less than a minute.¹¹

That was not the end of the story. The heavens opened - first in the House of Lords, then in the House of Commons. After eulogising Pope John XXIII, the assassinated President Kennedy and Malta's role in the Second World War - "a bastion of freedom and a symbol of what the Free World was fighting for" - the Lord Bishop of Chester complained that the religious provisions in the Malta Independence Bill before parliament were illiberal and unacceptable. It was essential that the Constitution of Malta should safeguard the rights of the many non-Catholics who lived there or visited the place. His Lordship was speaking up not only for the Church of England but for the British Council of Churches. He recalled the long and protracted negotiations between British ecclesiastical leaders and the Colonial Office as soon as the draft constitution had been published in 1961, in order to ensure that the rights of minority, non-Catholic groups should be adequately

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37. Similar recollections have been recounted to this writer by Dr Victor Ragonesi, who at the time was Borg Olivier's right-hand man, during a number of encounters. Guze' Cassar Pullicino, who was Acting Director of Information in Paul J. Naudi's absence overseas in 1962, recalled to this writer (during an informal encounter at Targa Gap on 9 June 1999) that Borg Olivier had once told him: "Do what Ragonesi tells you to." (*Int aghmel dak li jghidlek Ragonis, qisni qed nghidlek jien.*)

protected, and particularly in mixed marriages and their validity. Those expressions of anxiety were somewhat reluctantly withdrawn, because it was pointed out that Section 13 of that Constitution provided that

All persons in Malta shall have full liberty of conscience and enjoy the free exercise of their respective modes of religious worship.

No person shall be subject to any disability or be excluded from holding any office by reason of his religious profession.

It was argued at the time, the Bishop of Chester added, that if there should appear to be any discrimination in the administration of the marriage law this would be a "disability" within the meaning of the Constitution and that therefore there was sufficient safeguard. Referring next to the Constitution for Independence, Chester noted that clause 41 repeated the two subsections of Section 13 of the 1961 Constitution, but added a third subsection which stated:

Nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent or in contravention of subsection (1), to the extent that the law in question makes provision that is reasonably required in the interests of public safety, public order, public morality or decency, public health, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, and except so far as that provision or, as the case may be, the thing done under the authority thereof, is shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

Although one might feel that all this threw open the doors very wide and minimize the safeguards provided by the 1961 draft, at least in that Malta document the disability clause (had) remained:

But the document before us today goes considerably further even than this, and in the opinion of many virtually removes the safeguards which had been sought and which it was understood had been assured. Section 41 (1) repeats the first

subsection of the 1961 draft and the Malta versions. Subsection (2) repeats the questionable subsection of the Malta version. But the really vital section of both previous documents giving the assurance that "no person shall be subject to any disability" now disappears. This is a very serious modification...

No doubt, Chester continued, attention would be directed to Section 46 of the Constitution, which provided against discriminatory legislation of any kind. But paragraph (4)(c) specifically provided that

this section shall not apply to any law so far as that law makes provision with respect to adoption, marriage, dissolution of marriage, burial, devolution of property on death or any matters of personal law not herein before specified.

In other words, the Constitution then before them specifically excluded from the ban on discriminatory legislation that province of the law which dealt with marriage, which was the very area in which they had for a long time asked for reassurance and guarantee. If, therefore, the religious rights of those who were not Roman Catholics were to be preserved, it was essential that Section 13 of the original draft, which provided that no person should be subject to any disability for conscience sake, should be restored, so that there might be no doubt whatever on that score. Chester also wanted to ensure that protection from deprivation of property without compensation would apply to buildings owned by Communions other than the Roman Catholics in the Island, including buildings then situated on land held by one of the Services. He concluded:

Non-Roman Catholics will recognise with gratitude the statesmanship which has resulted in the removal of subsections 10 and 11 of Section 48 of the Malta Constitution which appeared to set the Church above the law. But it is of concern to many of us that in this day, when so many human rights are threatened and when, the world over, freedom is in jeopardy, we should appear to approve

S. J. S.

Arch Bishop of Canterbury
 is an issue about
 the "Catholic" clauses in
 the Malta Constitution.

Lambeth Palace, S.E.1

C. J. Rank
 C. M. Eastwood
 M. Kisch

15th May, 1964.

My dear Sandys,

I am sure you will not mind my writing about one point in the new Constitution for Malta which is likely to give particular concern to all the non-Roman Catholic Churches in this country. It is in Sub-Sections 10 and 11 of the new Section 48 which provide that "nothing done by the Roman Catholic Church in the exercise of its spiritual powers and duties shall be held to be in contravention of any of the provisions of this chapter"; and the same is to apply in the case of anything "contained in or done under" the authority of any law for the protection of the Religion of Malta.

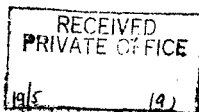
These phrases seem to open a wide and undefined door for the position of the Roman Catholic Church on lines which, I am sure, the other Churches which I have mentioned would never desire to claim for themselves.

I feel no doubt whatever that these clauses will arouse reactions if they were to be endorsed by Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Cantuari.

The Right Honble. Duncan Sandys M.P.
 Colonial Office,
 Great Smith Street,
 S.W.1.



The Archbishop of Canterbury's official letter to the Colonial Secretary opposing the proposed exemption clauses for the Roman Catholic Church in an independent Malta.

of legislation which in the slightest degree condones the continuance of restrictions and disabilities on religious grounds. This new Constitution is, in the opinion of many, a backward step from the 1961 draft. We ask that the protection from disability should be restored; and that the church property should be protected without question. With these provisions in the Constitution we should be able to support the measure before us...¹²

To go back on this bill now would have been to open a hornet's nest, surely involving the Catholic Church in Malta in all-out resistance and imperilling Dr Borg Olivier's hold on office. Some of the implications in Chester's misgivings, translated into a Maltese mentality, would have been seen to entail such niceties as having non-Catholics teach religion in Maltese schools, or not having obligatory religious lessons in class, Maltese marrying non-Catholics in Malta outside of the Catholic Church, or non-believers possibly buried on consecrated ground at the Addolorata cemetery; no disability with regard to the dissolution of marriage would have been seen or interpreted as a possible licence for divorce, and so on. All that might have suited the looser Protestant denominational groups or individuals living or sojourning in Malta but still offended against the family-based, historically preserved and conservatively led Maltese church as a bulwark of the island community, always wary of the proselyte, the infiltrator and the foreign master. Politically, it would have soothed Mintoff who was the church's *bête noir*.

Was it not a fact, charged Barbara Castle fiercely, that the point raised in another place yesterday about the effect of clauses 41 and 46 on the rights of religious minorities with regard to marriage and other matters was specifically raised in this House on Second Reading by her honourable friend the Member for Barking (Tom Driberg) and other honourable Members, and that the right honourable Gentleman (Duncan Sandys) "at that time pooh-poohed the idea that there was anything to worry about and suggested that

¹² Hansard, Lords, 28 July 1964, cols. 1015-1017.

we were making a mountain out of a molehill?" Was it not clear that Sandys had been "so busy trying to railroad his independence Bill through this House" that he had not taken time to understand his own Constitution?

Has he not grossly misled the House? Will he now apologise to the House, or will he take steps to see that the Royal Assent is not given to the Bill until the actual changes have been made in the Constitution to meet the legitimate fears of the Churches in this country?

Sandys told her he had nothing to apologise about. What had happened was that during the course of parliamentary discussion a weakness, or alleged weakness, had been revealed and the Government had undertaken at once to look into it... There was no technical problem of any kind. It was very important to get the Bill through before the House rose. Otherwise, there would be many months of delay in the granting of independence to Malta. The Constitution was introduced by an Order in Council which had not yet been made, and there was "no immediate hurry for making it." The House would not have a further chance of discussing this matter "unless it wishes to sit on into August."

Mr Bottomley, also from the Labour benches, returned to the charge that the Bill and the writing of the Constitution had been "rushed unnecessarily." He referred to a statement by Mr Sandys on 23rd July when he had said: "We are making certain changes in a liberal direction..." Would he now assure the House that clause 41 (3) of the earlier draft Constitution be restored to its full effect when the Order in Council was made? "That", retorted Sandys, "is precisely what I am discussing with the Prime Minister of Malta."¹³ Dr Borg Olivier, the Marquess of Lansdowne informed the Bishop of Chester in the Lords on the same day, had agreed to look into the matter at once.¹⁴

¹³ Hansard, Commons, 29 July 1964, extract enc., 926/1916/48583.

¹⁴ Hansard, Lords, 29 July 1964, extract enc., *ibid.*

Back at the Auberge d'Aragon, Borg Olivier and his legal advisers were indeed looking into this matter and a copious and even learned exchange of correspondence ensued, but by so readily agreeing to look into the matter at once Borg Olivier, who had left London three days earlier, knew only too well that by the time he could as much as reply, the bill was likely to have become law. And in any case, Borg Olivier would not budge.

After speaking to him on the phone, Sandys wrote to the Maltese Prime Minister on 30th July on the subject of the non-discrimination clauses. In at least three long and documented letters signed by Borg Olivier and addressed respectively to Sandys, Lansdowne and Wakefield, between 1st and 11th August 1964, Chester's case was tested and refuted by legal argument. Malta's case was made seriously and in earnest, countering at least some of the anxieties genuinely expressed by the Anglican prelate.¹⁵ "I can follow the Bishop of Chester's argument in his comparison of the old section 41 (3) with the new section 46," Borg Olivier began, "though that argument can, with respect, be easily refuted." But he could not see how this could affect the position of mixed marriages, which was admittedly "the motive force behind the whole representation."

Chester appeared to hold the view that Malta should be treated differently from all other Commonwealth countries in so far as protection against discrimination was concerned; that, in thus treating Malta differently, one should take an *absolute* attitude in framing the essential provision at least in so far as discrimination on religious grounds was concerned; and that the domestic law of Malta in relation to the form of marriage was bad and ought, after more than a century and a half, to be changed for the Maltese by a "parting" Order in Council from the United Kingdom.

It was true that in the draft Constitution prepared by the

¹⁵ In the course of the debate in the Lords, Chester recalled that he was in Malta when the Italian fleet surrendered in 1943, and he had served on one of the convoys making it to Grand Harbour.

Government of Malta section 41(3) provided that “no person shall be subject to any disability or be excluded from holding any office, other than an office entailing religious teaching of the Roman Catholic faith, by reason of his religious profession.” But that was the only provision against non-discrimination and was limited to grounds of religious profession. It was, on the face of it, crude and absolute and, “not without some strong opposition”, was inserted merely because it had appeared in much the same form in other Malta Constitutions. It was thought at the time that its insertion in the draft would make it possible to preserve the 1961 Constitution *status quo* in respect of non-discrimination. The ball was then thrown into Sandys’ court:

Subsequently you insisted very strongly on a general non-discrimination clause (which had been omitted by your predecessor in the present 1961 Constitution) and after some not inconsiderable discussion it was agreed to insert one, on the basis that it would absorb section 41(3). If section 41(3) were to survive alongside the new general provision against discrimination, a remarkable and not altogether logical situation would be created which the Malta Government would never have been able to accept. It is not correct to say, as is said in paragraph 6 of your message, that this was regarded only as a question of tidiness.

You will recall your insistence that the non-discrimination clause for Malta should not depart from the standard form and indeed this is so...¹⁶

Sandys was then referred to section 27 of Nigeria’s independence constitution; section 23 of Sierra Leone’s; section 24 of Jamaica’s; section 29 of Uganda’s; section 26 of Kenya’s; and section 23 of Malawi’s. Tanganyika had no code of human rights while Trinidad and Tobago only had two provisions of a general nature on the subject.

¹⁶ Borg Olivier/Sandys, 1 Aug. 1964, para. 2-4, 926/1990/48655.

The "remarkable view" propounded by the Bishop of Chester appeared to be that in the case of Malta "a substantial departure should be made from the standard provision, which might also constitute a dangerous precedent." In particular he referred to section 46(4)(c), which provided that the rule against discrimination should not apply to any law so far as that law made provision with respect to marriage and other matters of personal law. This was "the common form" and was to be found in *all* the Constitutions referred to above. It enabled Parliament, if ever it were to introduce civil marriage, to provide that this would not be a valid form of marriage for a Maltese Catholic which, as Sandys knew, in Maltese circumstances was necessary. This was "a provision which any constitutional lawyer must regard as objectively essential."

What Chester was complaining about was not in the Constitution but in the domestic law of Malta concerning the form and validity of marriage and this had not been changed by this or previous Constitutions. It was not removed by the old section 41(3) any more than it would be removed by the present section 46. Over all these years Maltese courts had continued to decide in the same way in respect of the validity and form of marriage, without the matter ever having been challenged in the Privy Council. In Borg Olivier's seven-page exposition, which bore Cremona's unmistakable stamp, reference was made approvingly to what Lord Douglas of Barloch had said in the same debate:

Marriages can take place there only according to the rites and customs of some particular Church. But the fact that this has continued to be the position in Malta is something for which this country cannot excuse itself if it is wrong, because we had the opportunity on many occasions, when the government reverted completely into British hands, to alter it if we considered it advisable to do so.

The response then went into the history of the vexed mixed marriage question in Malta over the decades, which had been the subject of voluminous official correspondence, 'diplomatic' negotiations between the British Government and the Holy See,

and of a special reference to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the 19th century. Whenever action was threatened from London to disturb the position, the Maltese responded with angry public meetings and protestations... What Chester was concerned about, and his concern had no doubt been shared by others at different times, was that under Maltese law the courts did not regard as valid a marriage, of which one of the parties was a Maltese Catholic, "not celebrated in accordance with the formalities established by the Council of Trent." Under this law it had indeed happened that a Malta-domiciled Catholic married an Englishwoman in London in the Registry Office and after some time returned to Malta and sought and obtained a declaration of invalidity of the "marriage". But the essential point remained that this by no means entailed "a disability" - no incapacity was involved - and, even if it did, it was *not* covered by the old section 41(3). In fact the invalidity of such a marriage was "not based on the religious profession of one of the parties... but on the non-compliance with the law of the land."

Nor was that juridically outrageous. It merely represented "adherence to one legal doctrine in preference to another." The Malta government quoted in its support from Cheshire's tome on private international law specifically on this subject:

This principle, that a marriage which is in accordance with the formalities of the *lex loci celebrationis*, is to be regarded as formally valid everywhere, even though it would have been void if solemnized in that manner in the country where one or both of the parties are domiciled, is generally but not universally accepted. Thus in those countries where status depends upon religious law, as in Yugoslavia and Greece for persons of the Orthodox faith, in Malta for Roman Catholics, and in Cyprus for Moslems and members of the Orthodox Church, a marriage contracted in disregard of the religious formalities of the domicil, no matter where solemnized, is not recognised as valid. For instance, a civil marriage contracted in London by a Roman Catholic domiciled in Malta is not recognised by Maltese law.

It was clear, however, that foreign views of this nature did not affect the principle that a marriage contracted in compliance with the local forms was recognised as formally valid by English law. In practice the parties avoided the unfortunate situation that arose from this conflict of laws by the performance of two separate ceremonies, one according to the local forms, the other according to the religious requirements.¹⁷

Section 41(3) was a crude non-discrimination provision restricted to grounds of religion, providing against the subjection of a person to a disability but not against the subjection to a restriction or the according of a privilege or advantage. It was unqualified and, to quote Professor De Smith,

although discrimination based on such criteria as colour, race, religion, language, sex or tribal or other social groupings is generally to be reprobated, a blanket prohibition of discrimination based on these grounds may be unwise.¹⁸

7 The standard non-discrimination clause of all Commonwealth constitutions since the Nigerian constitution contained a number of fair and reasonable qualifications reproduced in Malta's section 46. The Government of Malta proposed such a provision in an effort to preserve the 1961 Constitution *status quo* with regard to non-discrimination; that had now been "disturbed" by the British Government's insistence on a general non-discrimination clause, accepted by the Government of Malta on the basis that it absorbed, as indeed it should, section 41(3). Section 46 not only covered the same ground as the old section 41(3) but it afforded protection against the subjection to a restriction and the according of privileges or advantages, as well as widened the grounds of non-discrimination to cover also race, place of origin, political opinions and colour. It was thus considerably wider than section 41(3) and afforded

¹⁷ This mini-treatise also referred Sandys (and presumably Chester) to Martin Wolff's tome on private international law in case he wished to learn more about the exact situation prevailing in Greece.

¹⁸ De Smith, *The New Commonwealth and its Constitutions*, 1964, p. 135.

“incommensurably greater protection against non-discrimination in general.”

After further recapitulations, Borg Olivier’s communication concluded that the Government of Malta saw “no justification whatsoever” for any amendment of the agreed Constitution as a result of the representations that had been made:

If this incongruous storm in a tea-cup were, in spite of what has been stated above, to determine the British Government to attempt to impose once more its own will, departing in this respect from the standard pattern of Commonwealth Constitutions, you will no doubt appreciate that that would seriously affect my Government’s attitude not only to the new non-discrimination clause but also to certain parts of the other agreements which had proved so controversial before being initialled and about which I am still not happy, although I intend to honour them if nothing is introduced to disturb our general agreement.¹⁹

When Lansdowne came back on this in an *aide memoire* dated 6th August conveyed by Wakefield, the reply this time was rather more snappy and irritated. Borg Olivier told him there must be some misunderstanding because none of the arguments brought forward in his letter of 1st August had been answered in his message:

To put it briefly, in championing non-discrimination, you are really proposing to effect a double discrimination, external and internal. Externally, you are proposing to discriminate in the case of Malta vis-à-vis the non-discrimination clauses of the other Commonwealth constitutions by departing substantially and unwarrantably from the standard clause... Internally, within the ambit of the non-discrimination clause itself, you are proposing to discriminate in respect of grounds of religion amongst the various specified grounds of non-discrimination...

¹⁹ Borg Olivier/Sandys, 1 Aug. 1964, para. 5-12, ff. 3-7, 926/1990/48655.

Borg Olivier knew of “no constitution in the world” which had sought to join together the provisions of the new section 46 and the old section 41(3):

And you propose to do this after the initialling of the relevant document and, allow me to repeat this, in my view without any valid reason whatsoever.

The Maltese Prime Minister did not see how such an anomalous situation could properly be defended. Indeed he could not see why the British Government should wish to end up its colonial connection with Malta “with such an unhappy incident.” When the reason behind the Rt Reverend Prelate’s argument in the House of Lords was made known to the Maltese public, his misconceived assumption that the old section 41(3) afforded protection against the situation arising from the law of Malta and the judgments of Maltese courts on the subject of mixed marriages,

the inevitably resultant public indignation may well lead to such manifestations as to mar the atmosphere we have striven to create. That is why nothing has as yet been made known to the Maltese public on the matter.

Had he known at the time when he accepted the new section 46 and before the agreed Constitution was initialled that the British Government would after such initialling have insisted on the insertion of the old section 41(3), Borg Olivier told Lansdowne, he “would never have accepted” section 46:

I wish to make it clear that, for the reasons already given in full, my Government will not agree to an amendment of the non-discrimination clause in the agreed Constitution and, in the event of an attempted imposition, reserves to itself full freedom of action, secure in the knowledge that it can fully and adequately defend its position before the world.²⁰

²⁰ Borg Olivir/Lansdowne, 11 Aug. 1964, 926/1990/48655.

Borg Olivier also saw Wakefield about this matter, and the latter sent Sandys, who was in Austria, an account of their talk. It transpires that when Sandys had told the Commons he had called Borg Oliver, who had accepted to look into this matter at once, he could have given the impression that Borg Olivier had agreed to settle it in line with the demands being made on him. He asked Wakefield to remind Sandys that when the latter had rung him up "very unexpectedly" at his residence about the point at issue, he had told him that he would ring him up the following day after he would have looked properly into the matter,

and indeed I telephoned him the following day, setting out the views which I have since insisted upon and by no means acquiescing in the re-insertion of section 41(3), and earnestly begged him not to commit himself.

Borg Olivier noted, correctly, that nowhere did the parliamentary records show that Sandys had committed himself to any amendment, nor indeed could he reasonably have done so without going further into the matter and ascertaining whether the point raised by the Bishop of Chester was, when viewed against the background of the whole Constitution, justified or not. Even at the latest sitting of the House of Commons at which the matter was discussed, Sandys had prudently enough spoken of "a weakness or *alleged* weakness" and of undertaking "at once to look into it."

Borg Olivier dismissed the view taken by Sandys, as conveyed by Wakefield, that the matter in issue did not relate to any particular Malta law, such as that of marriage. The Bishop of Chester had related the matter specifically to the marriage law of Malta and the Secretary of State himself in the Commons on 29th July, had done the same. He had spoken of safeguards:

But safeguards for what or safeguards against what? When something is proposed to be introduced in such an instrument as an independence constitution, especially after it has already been approved and initialled, one must be quite clear in one's mind as to its purpose and what it entails.

Does the Secretary of State, and I say this with the greatest respect, fully realise all the implications and repercussions of his proposed amendment?

With regard to the point made by Sandys that section 41(3) had been in the Malta Constitution for over forty years, Borg Olivier reiterated that that was why it was thought that by reproposing that limited provision, it would not have been found necessary to introduce the general provision of section 46. When subsequently the introduction of section 46 was agreed to, it was so agreed to on the basis that it would replace the old section 41(3)... As it was, Borg Olivier concluded,

I am now faced with the remarkable and not altogether fair proposition that the Secretary of State wants both provisions, irrespective of the anomaly that would be created, the dangers inherent in the implications and the uniqueness of the resultant combined provision. I am confident, however, that on reflection, he will agree that section 46 should be left as it is. My colleagues and I have considered the matter very carefully and we must repeat that, for the reasons already stated, we cannot accept the Secretary of State's amendment.²¹

Duncan Sandys was navigating between Scylla and Charybdis. At the same time that the Borg Olivier administration was firing back its eloquent and adamant repartees with veiled threats of mass demonstrations in Malta if the truth became known, he was being assailed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by the British Council of Churches in support of both the Archbishop, who was their President, and of the Bishop of Chester. The Evangelical Alliance wrote to Sandys on 10th August and Sir Cyril Black wrote to him on the 12th, very much about the same thing, with "the Franco regime in Spain" thrown in for good measure. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, wrote to Sandys on 22nd August and the secretary of the British Council of Churches, the Rev.

²¹ Borg Olivier/Wakefield, 11 Aug. 1964, 926/1990/48655.

Kenneth Slack, M.B.E., did the same, on behalf of the Standing Committee of their International Department, two days later. Both were insisting on the reinstatement of the sub-section of Section 13 of the 1961 Constitution, which provided that no person should be subject to any disability or be excluded from holding any office by reason of his religious profession.²² Ramsey, a onetime Professor of Divinity at Durham and later at Cambridge, was the author of two cited books, one on *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. He was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961 to 1974; by 1964 he was a highly respected figure in Britain and in the Anglican Communion generally. An advocate of Christian unity, Ramsey's meeting with Pope Paul VI two years later, in March 1966, would be the first encounter between the leaders of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches since their separation in 1534. His correspondence with Sandys on the Malta question went back at least to July 1963, but in May 1964 he had written to him from Lambeth Palace specifically about subsections 10 and 11 of Section 48 (exempting the church in Malta in the exercise of her responsibilities from the new Constitution's human rights provisions). These he wanted removed. These phrases seemed to open "a wide and undefined door for the position of the Catholic Church" on lines which, Ramsey was sure, "the other Churches which I have mentioned would never desire to claim for themselves." He felt no doubt whatever that "these clauses will arouse reactions if they were to be endorsed by Parliament."²³

In what must rank as a masterpiece of legal drafting, and of English understatement, Sandys finally replied to his dear Archbishop on 28th August, as the days ticked away, seeking fully to reassure him without binding himself actually to reinstate the specific 1961 subsection now desired.

Except with regard to marriage and certain other matters, which were excluded in accordance with the precedents established in other

²² Slack/Sandys, 24 Aug. 1964, 926/1990/48655.

²³ Ramsey/Sandys, 15 May 1964, 926/1990/48655. See above, II, 12.

British territories, Sandys began, there could be "no doubt" that sections 41 and 46 of the Malta Independence Constitution, taken together, provided "more specific safeguards against discrimination of all kinds" than did the existing (1961) Constitution. The Bishop of Chester, however, in his speech of 28th July, expressed anxiety about the effect of "the exclusion of marriage from the application of Section 46" and the absence of a provision similar to section 13(2) of the 1961 Constitution, which prescribed that nobody should be penalised by reason of his religion. No laws of a discriminatory character relating to marriage had been passed in Malta "in this century", Sandys continued; and there was not "the slightest reason to suppose" that, in these times, any future Government of Malta would think of introducing "further religious discrimination." The problem arose, he noted, from the "peculiar nature" of Malta's existing marriage law. This still remained the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church, "originating in the Middle Ages." However, since the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, it had been qualified (by Section 120(1)). This had the effect of "nullifying it to any extent that it is inconsistent with the provisions of that Constitution, including Section 13(2)." He recognised that it was most important that the application of this ancient marriage law should continue "as at present" to be open to challenge in the Courts by virtue of Section 13(2) of the 1961 Constitution; and he could assure him that the Order in Council introducing the new Independence Constitution would be "framed in such a way as to secure that result." On the one hand, Sandys did not wish to minimise the importance of legal safeguards but, on the other hand, it had to be recognised that in the end these had their limitations.²⁴ Presumably Sandys meant to say that under the independence constitution outright discrimination, on more grounds than one, could be actionable at law, but there were normative as well as political constraints to what could be enunciated constitutionally, the more so where age-old domestic laws were concerned.

With tactful perseverance in excruciating difficulty and at the last moment, Borg Olivier and Cremona had had the better of the

²⁴ Sandys/Archbishop of Canterbury, 28 Aug. 1964, 926/1990/48655.

argument. This reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury was a palliative, not surrender. Sandys knew however that he had just satisfied Ramsey and his followers on the other two 'supremacy' subsections complained of, having had them duly removed as requested.

In that deliverance, if not in this one, the Apostolic Delegate, Mgr Cardinale, had a determining say on the Vatican's behalf. When he phoned up Christopher Eastwood on 21st July to find out about the form of the Secretary of State's draft statement to the Commons about the Malta Independence Bill, Eastwood obliged accordingly, whereupon Cardinale asked him to pass on his congratulations to Sandys "I said we were much indebted to him" Eastwood recorded by hand; "his help had really been a turning point in the whole negotiations."²⁵

Another hurdle in this final but still delicate stage of the Anglo-Maltese independence negotiations was defence, and other matters related to it. On this, Borg Olivier nailed his colours firmly to the mast. He was pro-West and anti-Communist. His government wanted to have an independent and sovereign state but as a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to continue, under a different arrangement, as the Queen of Malta. He also wanted a British military presence to be retained by treaty - for economic no less than for security purposes. The British were more interested in the latter than in the former, but they realised that one underpinned the other. No ambivalence there, and so far so good: the recipe for a smooth transfer of power and for a steady transition from colonialism to statehood. A resoluteness without hysterics. On that score, the British were titillated and indeed thrilled. In return, however, Borg Olivier and his colleagues expected from Britain and also from NATO some proper acknowledgement, and some dividends to accrue as well. Would these respond in kind?

²⁵ Min., C. Eastwood, 21 July 1964, 926/1916/48583. In an exchange of correspondence which probably constituted some kind of precedent, the Colonial Secretary and the Apostolic Nuncio heartily thanked and congratulated each other.

In their ongoing hypotheses about using Malta to make up for losses in Libya and Cyprus - there is not as much reference to Aden - the chiefs of staff had now reached the stage of adding up the officers and other ranks who might be transferred to Malta, possibly including an armoured reconnaissance regiment, the infantry battalion from Libya and a stockpile. Briefly, according to the latest calculations there would be 107 officers transferred to Malta, 76 from Libya and 31 from Cyprus; and 1,239 and 467 other ranks from Libya and Cyprus respectively, a total to Malta of 1,706. Costs for preparing and upgrading accommodation in Malta, together with all the other possible transfers of weaponry and equipment, were also listed in these breakdowns, totalling in all nearly £5,000,000.²⁶ It was also being assumed that, in addition to Luqa airfield, Ta' Qali airfield would continue to be put to some use, while Hal Far airfield would be retained as operationally active.

Hal Far and environs were a concern for the Borg Olivier administration because they wanted them themselves. The government had earmarked this zone for a Freeport project. In the negotiations over which lands would be retained or handed over under the Defence Agreement, Hal Far and the adjoining bays were thus on the agenda of both sides. Packing and mixing through the transshipment business, which major ports such as Hamburg, Trieste, Genova, Marseilles, Barcelona and Alexandria had already experimented with successfully, seemed to be one worthwhile investment project for Malta to pursue in restructuring and diversifying her economy.²⁷ The harbour and bays stretching from Marsaxlokk and Delimara to Birzebbuga and Kalafrana in the south, just off Hal Far, appeared to be the best suited for it. In July 1963 a UN trade policy adviser, Dr F. K. Liebich, had presented the Malta

²⁶ 'Administrative Facilities in Malta', enc. Lapsley/Chiefs of Staff Committee, 25 June 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489. As it turned out, within less than three years, Britain would decide to hasten the rundown in Malta considerably, causing a major upset in relations.

²⁷ On economic diversification, see above, II, 13.

government with a report on how such a project could be undertaken, and the Minister for Industrial Development, Dr Felice, had expressed interest in it. A team from Hamburg came over to Malta to further study the Freeport project and reported late in 1964.²⁸

When however the chiefs of staff, imbued with the idea of possibly extending the military use of Hal Far, asked the Colonial Office whether they would contribute to the upgrading costs, the latter held out no hopes in that direction.²⁹ Moreover, in the context of the Defence Agreement, the Maltese were quering the retention of Hal Far on the grounds that its use was necessary for "a freeport project of their own" which would also require "port facilities at Kalafrana." The Maltese were asked to say just what their requirements were and when they would arise "so that we can consider how far we can go to meet them", for example by surrendering Kalafrana and agreeing to joint use of Hal Far. Meanwhile the Ministry of Defence was asked to consider what the minimum British defence requirements were, so that "we will be in a position to demonstrate our willingness as far as possible to tailor our needs to fit in with Malta's economic needs."³⁰

The Malta Government's plan to establish a Free Port in the area of Hal Far and Kalafrana was discussed in London during the negotiations on the proposed Agreement on Mutual Defence and Assistance. British defence requirements in that area were re-examined in this light. As a result, it proved possible to plan future arrangements in a way that should meet the requirements of both Governments. The offers made by the British side in this connection were discussed orally and summarised in a note between officials on 21st June, but Dr Borg Olivier wished to have them formally on record. Briefly, the understanding reached on this question was that

²⁸ H. Canado, *op.cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 444-446.

²⁹ Min., Cumming Bruce, 27 May 1964, 926/1873/48489.

³⁰ Min., Jenkins/Cumming Bruce, 3 June 1964, 926/1873/48489.

the British Government would offer so to arrange matters that Kalafrana could, if necessary, be surrendered to the Malta authorities by the end of 1964. The proviso was that the British authorities could continue to use the Naval Armaments Depot at Kalafrana South and to convey torpedos between the Depot and the berthing facilities where they would be embarked or disembarked. The British Government also declared their readiness to allow the use of Hal Far by civil aircraft entering or leaving the Free Port area under arrangements to be worked out, subject to the retention of the right to revert to exclusive military use should circumstances make this necessary. Detailed arrangements would be discussed as soon as the Maltese would be ready to make use of these facilities for the Free Port project.³¹

The money-losing 'naval-turned-commercial' dockyard was an enormous headache, and it was still seen to be in some ways related to defence considerations. Strictly speaking this was not a responsibility of the Maltese government at all, but as it employed Maltese labour and was after all in Malta, its future was of great concern to any Maltese administration, especially of one battling to replace jobs that were being lost. The latest phase in the dockyard saga went back to 1958 when owing to changes in British naval deployment it had been decided that what until then was the 'Admiralty Dockyard' would be converted and operated as a commercial ship-repair yard. A long lease was granted to a new company, Bailey (Malta) Ltd., formed for this purpose by C.H. Bailey Ltd. of Newport, Monmouthshire. Under agreements with the company, Her Majesty's Government had undertaken to make loans up to a total of £7¹/₄ million to help meet the cost of the conversion and equipment of the Yard and to provide working capital. In 1960, certain financial transactions of the company had caused concern and an investigation had been carried out by the Accountant Adviser to the Board of Trade, Sir Richard Yeabsley. The then colonial secretary had required the company to appoint two

³¹ 'Draft Letter - The Hon. Dr. G. Borg Olivier', marked E/8, n.d., 926/1879.

independent directors nominated by him, one of whom was Yeabsley himself. A third director, nominated by the company, was also appointed, but these three directors all resigned in April 1962. The colonial secretary then appointed J. R. Muirie, from the leading chartered accountancy firm of Peat, Marwick & Mitchell, to inspect the company's accounts. According to Muirie's report, which was submitted in August 1962, the company had in a number of respects not been conducting its business in a proper manner, but no sooner had the colonial secretary insisted that matters be remedied and sought to replace certain directors than the company issued a writ, questioning his right to do so.³² Moreover, according to the Muirie report, under the control of the outgoing directors "at no time... did that company make a profit on commercial ship repair work." The profits shown resulted "entirely from a considerable volume of Admiralty work at favourable cost plus terms", but such work was no longer available as it used to be. The suggestion that C.H. Bailey had been responsible for sending many ships to Malta since the new managing agents Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson had been appointed, was "completely unreal." Of 290 ships repaired at Malta during Swan Hunter's first year, only 20 had come through C.H. Bailey.³³ By the beginning of 1964 the British government were involved with Bailey in litigation for the return of £3, 000,000.³⁴ Furthermore, it was not clear, in transfers of shares that had taken place, whether "the letters of Trust fully safeguard Bailey (Malta)'s investment in this company." It was alleged that any transfers of money or shares between C.H.Bailey Ltd. and Bailey (Malta) Ltd. had been made without the required knowledge or consent of some of those who had an interest in such transactions.³⁵

³² Huijsman/Watt, 14 Feb. 1963, conf., 926/3015.

³³ 'Dispute over Bailey (Malta) Dividend', and 'Admiralty Work', *The Financial Times*, 29 Oct. 1964, enc. 926/3915.

³⁴ Min., E. C. Burr, 8 Jan. 1964, 926/3015.

³⁵ Min., Mayle/Grattan-Bellew, 10 Apr. 1963, 926/3015.

It certainly looked as if the Government of an independent Malta would not only be inheriting the problems caused by a sudden Services rundown but, partly as a result of that, also a web of complications and intrigue arising from the situation at Malta Dockyard. "The great advantage in transferring our rights (to Malta) is that we should be relieved of all responsibility for the yard after independence", noted one savant, well in tune with others in the same office.³⁶ As it had been agreed by the Service Departments that all Service lands in Malta should be handed over free to the Malta Government on independence, that would include the dockyard but it would be subject to the lease of Bailey.³⁷ In such a transfer, there was a British financial interest, that is what the British government held to be their right to the repayment of the loans made to Baileys and the Council of Administration which now amounted to some £4,000,000. There was a risk that the British government would be saddled with a further and continuing financial liability for the yard. The prospects of the British Government getting any substantial repayment of the loans in the foreseeable future was regarded as "remote". By transferring the dockyard before the litigation was terminated, Britain would be transferring to the Government of Malta the right to determine the lease in the event of Bailey (Malta) Ltd. becoming bankrupt or being wound up. If Britain won the litigation, Britain presumably could rely on the Maltese government to take the necessary action "to get rid of Baileys."³⁸ Whatever the decision taken, it was supposed that some mention of it had to be made in the Defence Agreement.³⁹ The best way out would be, it was concluded, if the ownership would be simply transferred to the Malta Government by the Admiralty, subject to the lease to Bailey (Malta) Ltd., with British rights to loan repayments made over to the Malta

³⁶ Min., N.L. Mayle, 12 Sept. 1963, 926/2045.

³⁷ Min., C. Eastwood, 3 Oct., 1963, 926/2045.

³⁸ Min., Grattan-Bellew, 15 July 1963, 926/3015.

³⁹ Min., N. L. Mayle, 25 June 1963, 926/2045.

Government, as part of the general financial settlement, depending on what became of the litigation.⁴⁰

A revised brief excluded the Yard from the other defence property to be transferred to the Malta Government under the Defence Agreement because of various complications, subject to further discussions; and the Malta Government could not have been too keen to get saddled with this problem which was not one of its making. For the time being, administratively speaking, it was regulated by the Malta Dockyard (Temporary Provisions) Act passed by the Malta Legislative Assembly in February 1963. There was a top gear and well-connected Council of Administration chaired, on the recommendation of Duncan Sandys, by Sir Eric Milbourne; and there were Swan Hunter as managing agents; but the property as such was still entrusted to Baileys who carried on with their marathon litigation.⁴¹ The crunch really came later, in 1967, when British funds for the dockyard stopped and all contact with the Baileys had to be terminated. Given that it had practically no bearing on naval shipping and repairs, Independence *per se* would in no way resolve the festering dockyard problem, but for the time being Borg Olivier had at least managed to keep the dockyard gates open while avoiding being lumped with its financial liabilities lock, stock and barrel. In article 5 of the Defence Agreement, the dockyard, like the harbour and airfield, still could not, except by mutual agreement between the two governments, be used by forces

⁴⁰ Memo, C. Eastwood, 7 Oct. 1963, 926/2045.

⁴¹ Milbourne had great experience in shipping matters and port administration. The other members, also recommended by Sandys, were Sir Nicholas Cayzer, Chairman of the British and Commonwealth Shipping Company; Mr Charles Densem, a partner in Deloitte, Plender & Griffiths, the chartered accountants; and Lord Melchett of the merchant bankers M. Samuel & Co. The decision to send out *H.M.S. Troubridge* for major repairs was taken at the same time in the hope of kick-starting a new phase. Sandys *aide memoire*, arising partly from discussions he had held with Borg Olivier in December 1962, conf., Feb. 1963, shortly before the passage of the Malta Dockyard (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1963, enc. 926/3015.

other than Maltese and British, or NATO forces under certain conditions.⁴²

Much more insidious, from a strict defence point of view in the early 1960s, was an issue which was very hush-hush at the time, and one which has never been comprehensively treated since. This was a difference of opinion between the Maltese and the British side which - to the latter - was of the utmost importance. Either as a negotiating tactic or because he had had second thoughts about his earlier readiness to consider granting Polaris base facilities to the U.S. Navy, now Borg Olivier wished that the Defence Agreement should

preclude nuclear propelled vessels and other vessels carrying nuclear weapons, explosives, or ammunition from using or passing through Maltese territory, territorial waters, or airspace.

Mr Sandys therefore asked the Ministry of Defence to consider whether a concession might be made in this field in a different form. Could not the Maltese be given an assurance, of the kind given by the Americans to the British, that Malta "would not be used as a base for nuclear operations without their concurrence?"

Mr Thorneycroft, the Secretary of State for Defence, understood the difficulty that this point was making in the negotiations. However, he did not see "any room whatever for a concession upon it."⁴³

Nuclear weapons were the military craze of the sixties for those that had them or sought to acquire them. Malta certainly had no interest, means or aspiration to enter that domain pro-actively. Unless this was one of his bargaining chips from under the counter - he had

⁴² In terms of legislation, the problem was largely regulated by the Malta Dockyard Act 1968 when a Malta Dockyard Corporation was set up. On this see E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, esp. p. 67. However, the dockyard was and generally has continued to be the single most serious liability inherited by the Malta Government from the British period, financially, economically and politically.

⁴³ Hockady/Huijsman, 1 July 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489.

shown himself receptive a year earlier to the possibility of having nuclear-powered submarines based in Malta - Borg Olivier, a little islander, was more likely suspicious of and hostile to these 'new' inventions by the big powers for mass destruction - weapons deriving their destructive force from the energy released during nuclear fission or fusion. As nuclear weapons were not limited to a tactical short-range, for use on the battlefield (in which case he might have cared less) but included theatre medium-range and strategic long-range varieties, Borg Olivier may have reckoned that it would be in Malta's best interest if, come Independence, she could steer away from any direct association with these things. In storage, transit or otherwise, nuclear weapons could be dangerous in themselves, as well as a magnet for reprisals in the event of an outbreak of hostilities in the Mediterranean region. Nuclear weapons were spreading fast by 1964. Furthermore, before 1968 there was no treaty to stem or regulate nuclear proliferation. For Britain, as for the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., however, nuclear power for bombs, missiles and other uses, including submarines, was becoming increasingly important to their respective defence systems, causing them to recast defence planning and budgeting. Yet these were hardly 'defensive' weapons. As Malta herself for obvious reasons had never attacked anyone or harboured any expansionist ambitions, in her national psyche she was accustomed to think mainly in terms of how best to defend herself against enemies - from the marauding Muslim corsairs of old to the dive-bombing German *stukas* of more recent memory. Who knew what the future might hold? On the other hand, however, she also needed to be defended, especially once she would become independent, without an army, a navy or an air force or any defence set-up of her own worth mentioning. Borg Olivier had to face this paradox. The British knew it.

There had been heated exchanges between the Soviets and the Americans in 1963 when the Polaris programme was being extended to the Mediterranean. The U.S.S.R. suggested that the Mediterranean be declared a nuclear-free zone and in a note to the United States in May, 1963, specifically mentioned Malta in the context of plans

to place in the Mediterranean American atomic submarines equipped with the "Polaris" nuclear missile. Spanish ports and British military strongholds on Cyprus and Malta have been designated as possible bases for these submarines. There have been reports that the "Polaris" submarines will also use Turkish, Greek, and Italian ports. Two such atomic submarines have already entered the Mediterranean and are getting "the feel" of the coastal waters of Greece and Turkey.

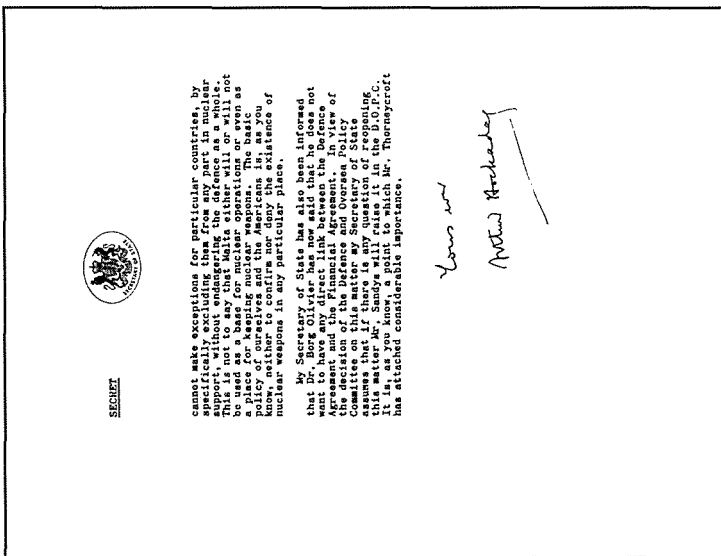
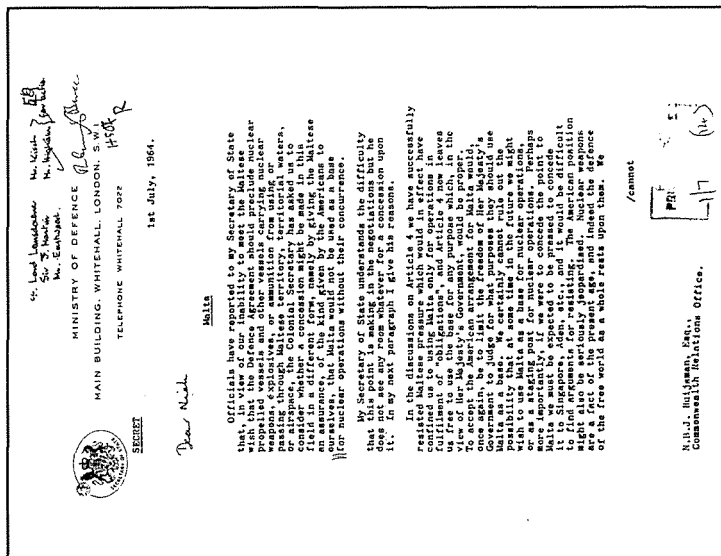
The U.S.A. and some of its allies are thus demonstrating once again that the concern to prevent thermonuclear war or even reduce the danger of its occurrence is alien to their policy...⁴⁴

The American response to this "propagandistic attack" was that the U.S. Government was

compelled to strengthen the security of its Allies in the Mediterranean only after their security had been directly threatened by the Soviet Union's deployment of an extensive array of missiles aimed at countries in the area. Consequently the United States and the threatened Mediterranean countries were forced in their own defense to counteract the striking power of these Soviet nuclear missiles and Soviet nuclear-equipped aircraft which were poised for attack on the region. If it had done otherwise, the United States would have failed in its duty to help its Allies to defend themselves against a form of nuclear blackmail under which the Soviet Union could have attempted to force the Mediterranean countries to succumb to Soviet dictation or Soviet domination.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ 'The Defense of the Mediterranean (16) Polaris Submarines in the Mediterranean: Soviet Note to the United States, May 20, 1963', *Documents on American Foreign Relations* (ed. R.P.Stebbins and E.P.Adam, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1964), p.105.

⁴⁵ '(17) United States Note to the U.S.S.R., June 24, 1963', *ibid.*, p.108.



The question of nuclear weapons and the possession of an effective deterrent was a top political and military concern for Britain, as for other countries, in the Sixties. Although earlier he had been ready to consider a Polaris base, Borg Olivier now put up a resistance to Malta harbouring nuclear weapons. That Malta not be an exception to the code of nuclear rules was part of the final defence-finance package heralding Independence.

Borg Olivier must have realised how big and delicate an issue this was and tried to steer clear of it, or to tempt fate.

In discussions on article 4 of the Defence Agreement, M.O.D. officials noted, Maltese pressure, which would have in effect confined Britain to using Malta only for operations in fulfilment of "obligations", had been successfully resisted.⁴⁶ Article 4 now left the British free to use the base for any purpose which, in the view of Her Majesty's Government, would be proper. In response to the suggestion made by the colonial secretary, it was further noted that:

To accept the American arrangement for Malta would, once again, be to limit the freedom of Her Majesty's Government to judge for what purposes they should use Malta as a base. We certainly cannot rule out the possibility that at some time in the future we might wish to use Malta as a base for nuclear operations, or as a staging post for nuclear operations.

Perhaps more importantly, the Ministry of Defence was afraid that if they were to concede the point to Malta, they could well be expected to be pressed to concede it to Singapore, Aden and elsewhere. It would then be difficult to find arguments for resisting. The American position might also be seriously jeopardised:

Nuclear weapons are a fact of the present age, and indeed the defence of the free world as a whole rests upon them. We cannot make exceptions for particular countries, by excluding them from any part in nuclear support, without endangering the defence as a whole.

This was not to say that Malta either would or would not be used as "a base for nuclear operations" or even as "a place for keeping nuclear weapons". The basic Anglo-American policy was neither to confirm nor deny the existence of nuclear weapons in any particular place.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See above, II, 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 2, para. 1.

Nuclear policy was not a subject likely to be profusely documented; much of the sensitive discussion involved was security-bound and top secret. From such revealing shreds of evidence as have survived, together with the memories of one or two of the handful of counsellors accompanying Borg Olivier at the Savoy to whom he confided what was going on, it is crystal clear that the anti-nuclear position taken by Malta was, for the British, a grave stumbling block. The Ministry of Defence, surely with the backing of the Foreign Office, and certainly that of the Office of the Prime Minister, would not let go on this question. In his maiden speech as Prime Minister in the House of Commons in November 1963, Douglas-Home had posited as the main issue in the forthcoming general election, an independent nuclear deterrent for Britain.⁴⁸

Tentatively, a letter was formulated to be sent by Borg Olivier, which the British Government would acknowledge without ado. In this, certain assurances and explanations which the latter was giving verbally, would be spelt out. In a draft letter to the colonial secretary which remained in draft form and was never sent - and which reserved the right of the Maltese government to be free to raise any objections it might have in this matter - verbal explanations given by the British Government to Dr Borg Olivier in 1964 were recorded, as follows:

- (a) that apart from the temporary storage of nuclear weapons in transit the British Government then had no plans to establish and use Malta as a nuclear base or for the storage therein of nuclear weapons and that it was most unlikely that Malta would be so used;
- (b) that Malta was really unsuitable for such use;
- (c) that exclusion of nuclear matters from the Agreement would create an undesirable precedent in relation to

⁴⁸ "L-Elezzjoni tkun fuq id-Deterrent Nukleari Indipendenti" - Sir Alexander Douglas-Home', *Il-Helsien*, 13 Nov. 1963, p.1.

other countries and that for obvious reasons the British and American Governments have never been willing either to confirm or to deny that nuclear weapons are or are not in any particular place;

- (d) that it is most unlikely that a situation would arise in which nuclear operations might take place without Commonwealth Prime Ministers being aware of it beforehand.⁴⁹

While there were really no hard and fast undertakings in the gist of these assurances or explanations, they nevertheless constituted an understanding that to the extent that Malta would be used for nuclear purposes such use was likely to be rather minimal. The third paragraph of the unsent draft letter confirmed the M.O.D. argument being made to the C.O. - that it was because of the *praxis* elsewhere, as in Aden and Singapore, that Malta could in no way be exempted. That 'give away' letter by Arthur Hockady sent from Thorneycroft's office to Nick Huijsman at the Commonwealth Relations Office on 1st July 1964,⁵⁰ was as would be expected rather more frank, less guarded and punctilious, leaving the whole matter somewhat open ended. And that essentially was where it rested.

On Saturday 11th July Borg Olivier was invited to lunch, alone, by Douglas-Home at Chequers, which was the prime minister's official country residence on a large estate in the more leafy surroundings of Buckinghamshire, north-west of London. They would not have noticed that, ironically, that building dates back to 1565, the year of Malta's Great Siege, when it was cannon balls and scalding oil, rather than nuclear fission and fusion, that had tempered the East's westward advance. Chequers had since 1921, when David Lloyd George first resided there, become a seductive weekend retreat where British prime ministers customarily entertained important guests in what were known as 'ministerial weekends'. The nuclear

⁴⁹ E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ See above, pp. 591-592.

question was sufficiently serious to the British Government for Borg Olivier to be treated and feted in this way. Sandys was there too. After the lunch of the two prime ministers, with the colonial secretary in attendance most of the time, Borg Olivier confided to his assistants that he had been prevailed upon not to make the nuclear issue public. It was agreed that a formula would be found which satisfied Borg Olivier but which would be worded in such a way as to be understandable only to those who were already aware of the problem - a lovers' code.

Article 7 of the Defence Agreement, as agreed to and then published officially, would thus read as follows:

Arrangements shall be made for consultation between the Government of Malta and the Government of the United Kingdom and their respective authorities on the operation of this Agreement, and each Government shall have the right to raise with the other at any time any question on the application of this Agreement where that is materially affected by any change of circumstances.⁵¹

What this language of the Sybil was supposed to mean exactly is obscure, particularly in view of the stated policy of refusal by the British authorities, as by the American ones, to neither accept nor deny whether nuclear weapons were in use or in storage or anywhere. Was it a game of blind man's bluff, a Nelson's eye? It rather meant something in relation to and confronted with what the text of the article had read like before: when it had simply stated that arrangements for consultation on the operation of this Agreement should be such as might be agreed between the two Governments.

What it *did* mean for Malta is that within a matter of days Sandys would be in a position to announce to Borg Olivier an OK - not only on the defence agreement, but also on a financial package.

⁵¹ According to Ragonesi, Douglas-Home gave Borg Olivier his word of honour that no "nuclear" use would be made of Malta without prior consultation; but see E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, esp. p. 38.

Here too there had been some lingering disagreement. Borg Olivier had long said that he did not wish to have any direct link between the Defence Agreement and the Financial Agreement. When this matter had been raised, more than once, during the meetings of the chiefs of staff, who had advocated an intimate linkage, Mr Cumming Bruce for the C.O. had informed them that neither Borg Olivier nor the Treasury were in favour of it.⁵² Given, however, the defence-motivated preoccupations with developments in the Mediterranean and Middle East, resulting in a greater need of Malta for defence purposes, and the fear of an abrogation of any Defence Agreement or worse by a Mintoff regime, this linkage argument impressed itself all the more upon Mr Thorneycroft.

For Thorneycroft, as for Mountbatten, Independence for Malta was a *festina lente*. Like Douglas-Home, they were wary of it, and would have delayed it if they could; at one point it seemed indeed possible that they would succeed. Douglas-Home was very cautious and in two minds about it; he had heartily hoped that the independence referendum in May would be "inconclusive", so that Malta's independence would be, to use Thorneycroft's verb, "shelved". And so was R. A. Butler, the Foreign Secretary, judging for example by his office's formal request that they be kept informed of any code-named military operations for the Malta contingencies.⁵³ It is thus not surprising to see that during the last rounds of the Anglo-Maltese negotiations, the Ministry of Defence was insisting on a direct linkage between the two agreements: defence and finance. Put bluntly, this meant: no base, no cash.

This matter had been again considered at the highest levels, in the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, and decided upon there, and by Cabinet. Thorneycroft therefore felt that if there were any question of "reopening this matter" because of Borg Olivier's request, Sandys would have to raise it in the D.O.P.C. The direct

⁵² See above, II, 15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

linkage was "a point to which Mr Thorneycroft has attached considerable importance."⁵⁴ Thorneycroft must have felt reasonably sure that if Sandys were to re-open the matter in support of Borg Olivier's or the Treasury's preferences, he would still be unable to change the decision taken. Having quickly conceded Independence, they would lastingly ensure defence. The 'base for cash' posture was seen as a sinecure. As a *quid pro quo* written into the agreement, it might even deter a Mintoff, they reckoned.

In the summer of 1964 the British military presence in Malta consisted of four ships of one escort squadron, one submarine division (*H.M.S. Ausonia* plus two submaries), one minesweeping squadron consisting of six units, and the Royal Naval Observer School at Hal Far; in addition there were normally one escort and a number of minor vessels in reserve and refitting plus some fleet auxiliaries and boom defence vessels. The army had two infantry battalions plus support and administrative units, and the R.A.F. had one Shackelton Squadron for maritime reconnaissance, and a Canberra Squadron for photographic reconnaissance, together with support, administrative and movement elements. Apart from the other possible contingencies already mentioned, there was a U.K.-N.A.T.O. project to supplement and improve the existing communications facilities at Rinella Radio Station by a new station at Burmarrad, but it had not been possible to get approval for constructing this station because of "the uncertainty of our security of tenure in Malta after independence and of the uncertainty about the future of CINCAFMED Headquarters in Malta." If it was decided to retain HAFMED in Malta, this project would be allowed to proceed together with the modernisation of the existing facilities at Rinella.⁵⁵

This was after the policy of running down the Service establishments over a four-year period from 1963 to 1966 had started being implemented especially for the army and air force, with the savings

⁵⁴ Hockady/Huijsman, 1 July 1964, sec., f. 2, para. 2, 926/1873/48489.

⁵⁵ COS 167/64, enc. J. H. Lapsley, 27 May 1964, sec., f. 4, 926/1873/48489.

envisaged to Britain from this being of about £7,000,000 in annual costs; and by 1965/66, of some 286 officers, 1,833 ratings, 239 U.K.-based civilians, plus some 4,700 Maltese, from the Royal Navy; together with 10 officers, 170 other ranks, plus some 2,000 Maltese, from the Army; and 30 officers, 170 other ranks, and 550 Maltese from the R.A.F.⁵⁶

An Allied Staff of 89 officers and 124 ratings were based at HAFMED, Malta, in addition to which HAFMED received frequent visits from NATO naval and air forces, but SACEUR had recently submitted "new proposals for command in the Mediterranean whereby CINCAFMED would be disestablished and replaced by an Italian COMNAVSOUTH at Naples."⁵⁷ The British, supported in this by the Americans, were resisting uncertainty in that domain, mainly through the North Atlantic Council.⁵⁸

Negotiations under way for the mutual defence and financial agreements obviously had to keep all these variables in mind, quantifying and costing them. Somehow they had to compensate for the losses in personnel, expenditure and employment to Malta, the benefits arising from the retention of a military presence, and a golden handshake by way of a financial kick-start into the new era of Independence.

There is no doubt that the British preferred to strike a deal with Borg Olivier than with Mintoff. On the whole, they had come round to the view that they were on surer ground dealing with Borg Olivier than with Mintoff. In spite of some more liberal and secularist concepts vaunted by Mintoff with which the British generally sympathised, he came to be seen increasingly as politically erratic

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 3.

⁵⁷ 'NATO Considerations - Location of Headquarters COMNAVSOUTH', *ibid.*, f. 12.

⁵⁸ On Malta-NATO relations, including discussions about Malta in the North Atlantic Council, see below, pp. 609-619.

and ideologically dangerous. In the mid-fifties, when Mintoff was campaigning for Malta's Integration with Britain, they would have much preferred Mintoff to Borg Olivier;⁵⁹ but by the mid-sixties, that had changed markedly. In 1964 the British Government, having finalised a Defence Agreement to their satisfaction, wanted to support Malta, and Borg Olivier's administration, as well as they could afford to, cocking a snook at Mintoff. That was partly out of a moral obligation to Malta but, no less, it was to help Borg Olivier consolidate and to keep Mintoff at bay. Of course they had in interest in doing this; so, to a lesser extent, had Western Europe. But it turned out in the end to be largely a mutual Anglo-Maltese interest. After all, an independent Malta left to her own devices would have been as defenceless as it then was economically dependent - more so with the sudden British withdrawal after so long an association with the Island. That was a fact of life. There is nothing theoretical about it. On the strength of the documentation now available, it is impossible to sustain a claim made in 1989 that:

when it came to deciding which particular leader of the major Maltese parties they preferred to deal with, British officials came to the conclusion that there was precious little difference between them. They all stuck determinedly to their guns in their effort to achieve the best possible deal for Malta within the political ideology that they professed. This conclusion also emerges in an unmistakable manner from the British official documents available.⁶⁰

While some main issues remained largely the same, to suggest at least with regard to the early 1960s that British officials saw precious

⁵⁹ On the Integration question, see esp. D. Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (Cass, Lond., 1971) and, J. M. Pirotta, *Fortress Colony, op.cit.*, vol. 2, on 1955-1958.

⁶⁰ J. M. Pirotta, 'Contemporary Maltese History', *The Sunday Times*, Valletta, 2 Apr. 1989, p. 25. Pirotta was rebutting an article by Dennis Sammut entitled: "March, 1979: when things really changed" (*The Sunday Times*, Valletta, 26 Mar. 1989).

little difference between the leaders of the main Maltese parties, would be wide off the mark. How far those leaders were themselves being patriots in equal measure, is something else; but so far as British officials were concerned in the 1960s, they had a decided preference for Borg Olivier's variety of doing politics over Mintoff's, and they showed it.

The point was made unequivocally enough by probably the most knowledgeable officer covering the Malta and Mediterranean desk at the Colonial Office, Mr J. M. Kisch, in reply to a pregnant query from Mr J. C. Morgan of the Commonwealth Relations Office, as to how it was proposed to secure "that Mintoff could neither seize power nor, if elected constitutionally, abrogate such a defence agreement." The object in asking being of course, as stated, "that we do not want to become inheritors in Malta of a Zanzibarian situation!"⁶¹

Zanzibar, an island in the Indian Ocean off what was then called Tanganyika, about five times the size of Malta with a smaller population, had just become independent and soon afterwards, in January 1964, all hell broke loose in a violent revolution. Under the dictatorial direction of the Afro-Shirazi Party, led by Abeid Karume, a onetime sailor, and other army men, the Sultan of Zanzibar was deposed in a *coup d'état*; a Revolutionary Council was set up; and the nationalisation of all land formerly owned by the Arab ruling class was accompanied by countless killings.⁶² Briefly, Westerners were made unwelcome as financial, technical and military help flowed into Zanzibar from the Chinese and the East Germans. Soon

⁶¹ In a letter headed "Top Secret", J.C.Morgan from the C.R.O.'s Mediterranean Department, was writing to J. Kisch at the C.O., with regard to a decision taken by the chiefs of the defence staff, 4 June 1964, 926/1873/48489. On this see above, II, 15.

⁶² For a long time Zanzibar's primary export had been slaves, but in the twentieth century coconuts and especially cloves became the more important cash crops and exports. The *coup's* anchor man was a peasant, 'Field-Marshal' John Okello.

afterwards, on the Zanzibari revolutionary example, there was an attempted *coup d'état* in neighbouring Tanganyika, another newly-independent state, causing her president Julius Nyerere to go into hiding.⁶³ That was the kind of thing British officials, and politicians, did not wish to see happen in an independent Malta (unlike Zanzibar, not a multi-racial society).

"Your letter of 4th June referring to COS 38th Meeting raises a large question", Kisch told Morgan on the following day:

To begin with, I think one can say briefly that the Secretary of State has no intention of allowing a Zanzibari situation in Malta. Borg Olivier is discussing with Lord Lansdowne today the question of U.K. support to Malta's internal security. It would indeed be absurd if we were to allow Mintoff to seize power by force; it would imply that we would be making no attempt to retain what has now become a more important defence interest in Malta.

As far as the Colonial Secretary was concerned, the Commonwealth Relations Office could rest assured that "the Forces would be instructed to quash such a coup" assuming that the Maltese Police, etc. were inadequate to the task. He supposed it was difficult to make assumptions about what might be the Government's attitude if the General Election there brought in a new administration, but he did not really see that they could take a very different view. Kisch would however expect that if a Labour Government were returned to power in Britain, Mintoff would reopen talks with them, and indeed a Labour Government might seek to influence Mintoff to take a more reasonable line. What follows is borne out by evidence from various sources, to which ample reference has already been made, as well as by an analysis of the plain facts:

⁶³ In October 1964 Nyerere negotiated the union of the two countries to form Tanzania, making the troublesome Karume his Vice-President. Karume was assassinated in 1972. See R. Sadlevi, *Tanzania: Journey to Republic* (Lond., 1999), esp. ch. 23, 'Revolution in Zanzibar and Army Mutiny, 1963-1964'.

The Colonial Secretary has very much in mind the necessity of putting Borg Olivier in as favourable a position as possible to retain power. On current form I would not expect Mintoff to have good chances of being successful at the next Malta general elections, which have to be held some time before March, 1966.

If one day Mintoff were returned to power (although Lord Strickland had never recovered his position after his quarrel with the Church even although he had reconciled himself to them) it was interesting to speculate what might happen. The point was that Malta depended "so entirely" on Services expenditure which, even at the end of the rundown, was not likely to fall below £12,000,000:

How could the Maltese be employed, and how could they buy their food if the place was completely neutralised? Mintoff has absurd ideas about changing over the economy in a matter of a few years, but he would soon find out that this was impossible.

Kisch, who had been on the independence negotiations from the start, imagined that two thoughts were uppermost in Mintoff's mind. The first was that the Malta Independence Constitution could be so framed as to give him little chance of ever returning to power. As the Colonial Secretary did not intend to accept Borg Olivier's Constitution as it stood, Mintoff might find that his fears were exaggerated. Secondly, Mintoff could not accept that "the proposed Defence Agreement is binding on him because that is his main bargaining weapon for money, etc." Personally, he found it hard

to envisage the Maltese, who are most concerned about money and jobs, following Mintoff into a situation where they had neither, and it is exceedingly difficult to see any other power being able to fill the vacuum that would be left by the withdrawal of the British Forces, and also of course the withdrawal of British civil aid which we may assume would not be continued if we were driven from the island.

Such considerations, Kisch thought, were by no means absent from Maltese minds, and that was one reason why the standing and success of the Malta Labour Party at the moment were not encouraging to Mintoff. Furthermore, when Malta became independent, the people would be forced to take a more responsible attitude. "They realize, I think, that it will not be like the good old days when the British could always suspend the Constitution and restore order."

Some of the points and impressions made in Kisch's letter are evidently his own but, on the strength of his inside knowledge and reading of the situation, the general drift of things bears him out. The weakness about these somewhat optimistic arguments, Kisch felt, was "the poverty of Borg Olivier as a politician, or rather as an administrator."

I can only hope that on independence the better Maltese who at the moment keep clear of politics, will find themselves forced to take a hand. I also derive some comfort from the improbability of Egypt or Russia being able or prepared to put in vast quantities of money.

The fact is that Mintoff's neutrality policy is such nonsense that I find it difficult to write a sensible letter about him.⁶⁴

The C.R.O. found this explanation about possible future actions by Mintoff "extremely useful":

We appreciate to the full the difficulties you have outlined and hope that the Maltese themselves will see which side their bread is buttered. We have noted the proposals which you have advised the Secretary of State to make in respect of financial aid to Malta as one way of "putting Borg Olivier in as favourable a position as possible to retain power" by

⁶⁴ Kisch/Morgan, 5 June 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489.

assisting him to keep down unemployment, and thus maintain a quiet and stable background, not only for our future relations but also against which to enjoy defence facilities on the island.⁶⁵

Briefly, the purpose of the Defence Agreement, as drafted by the last week of June, and as defined by the British Government, was to provide that British Forces would be enabled to remain in Malta and to carry out their roles effectively but with proper regard for the well-being of the people of Malta. It was recognized that, although Malta had been a base for British Forces, for many years and played an important part in two world wars, changes in the size and disposition of British Forces in Malta had diminished and a considerable run-down of the Forces stationed there had been taking place. Nevertheless, important requirements remained, including the need for forward operating facilities for the Royal Navy and for airfield facilities for the Royal Air Force. Although no one could foresee what further changes the future might bring it was expected that these requirements would continue. It was further stated that the British Forces had always made an important contribution to the economy of the island and expected that in spite of the run-down this would still be very substantial. Britain and Malta therefore had strong reasons of self-interest for making proper provision for the continued presence of British Forces in the island. This was the line to be taken in legitimizing the agreement politically in Britain, one that was not far removed from that of the Borg Olivier administration itself, although this would emphasise rather more Malta's needs and the benefits to Malta from it. It was noted that the links which had been forged between Malta and the Forces through the years of their presence on the Island went far beyond the economic and purely defence links and for this reason too "both sides in these discussions have tried very hard to make mutually satisfactory arrangements". The Maltese as well

⁶⁵ Morgan/Kisch, 12 June 1964, sec., 926/1873/48489.

as the British government representatives were "satisfied that we have succeeded."⁶⁶

The Agreement itself only contained ten articles, but was supplemented by detailed and specific annexes. It provided for "mutual defence" and consultations on measures to be taken jointly or separately to ensure the fullest co-operation, and that the closest co-operation between the armed forces of the two countries would be fostered. If so requested by the Government of Malta, the Government of the United Kingdom, would so far as it could provide assistance or advice as would be agreed in the training of and advice to the armed forces of Malta in various ways, including logistical support. Under article 4, Malta would grant Britain "in peace and war" the right to station armed forces and associated British personnel and to use facilities for the purposes of "mutual defence", the fulfilment of international or Commonwealth obligations, the assistance of "other nations in maintaining their independence and stability", or the protection of citizens of the U.K. and colonies or of Malta. The modalities and other details governing these rights and facilities were spelt out in an annex. According to article 5, no forces "other than the forces of Malta and the United Kingdom" would be stationed in Malta or be "permitted to use" harbour, dockyard, airfield, staging or communications facilities in Malta, unless that use was rendered necessary by "distress in the course of sea or air navigation", or to establish such facilities in Malta. There was however an introductory saving clause to all this: "Except under arrangements made between the two Governments". Moreover, this article would not apply to "the forces of any Party to the North Atlantic Treaty", to which the Government of Malta might accord such rights or facilities which did not "impede" the exercise of the rights or the use of the facilities granted to the U.K. Article 6 as it stood in draft form would be re-written and enlarged to take account of the British concern regarding nuclear weapons. Provision

⁶⁶ This edited typed draft, on 926/1916/48583, was originally intended for the colonial secretary's speech on the passage on the Defence Agreement in his speech on the Malta Independence Bill, the substance of which was in fact retained.

was made for consultations on the operation of the Agreement, and that nothing would prejudice the rights and obligations devolving on either Government under the UN Charter. The Annex to the Agreement would be an integral part of it, and the Agreement would come into force on the date of signature and would remain in force for a period of 10 years thereafter (that is, until 1974).⁶⁷

One of the last re-drafting exercises (apart from the nuclear weapons question) related to some kind of linkage between defence and finance, with the assistance of the Treasury Solicitor's office. For this they were using a combination of the Libya⁶⁸ and Cyprus⁶⁹ models of 1953 and 1960 respectively. A third recital - in the preamble to the Agreement - was therefore drafted, with a separate article intended for inclusion in the Agreement itself. The wording in the Libya Treaty which said specifically "in return for facilities" was thought best avoided as this savoured rather too much of a price;⁷⁰ but there would be further discussion and some modification of this formula before the texts of the two Agreements would be initialled. The other technical but necessary consideration with regard to the Defence Agreement being now determined more or less in final, was the means for bringing it into operation, mainly through the Visiting Forces Act, 1952. An order to be made under it would be ready for signature on Independence Day.⁷¹

In defence policy - again not unrelated to economic and financial considerations - one of Borg Olivier's stratagems was to interest NATO more in Malta: for reasons of stability and, as he saw it, profit.

⁶⁷ 'Draft Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Malta', ff. 1-4, enc. 926/2078.

⁶⁸ Cmd. 9043, art. 3.

⁶⁹ The Exchange of Notes on Cyprus, Cmd. 1093, Appendix R.

⁷⁰ Hall/Galsworthy, 15 June 1964, conf., 926/2078.

⁷¹ Dromgoole/Kisch, 24 June 1964, 926/1916/48583.

The British were rather keen on this initially and they tried to lobby for it, but without much success. The Maltese government proposed that NATO establish in Malta an International Institute of Science and Technology.⁷² This was strategy tinged with academia: it would have meant promoting Malta as a world centre of excellence in strategic studies and technological research in military-related fields, drawing expertise, resident scholars, support staff and technical facilities from Western Europe and North America to Maltese shores. A decorous softener from the harsh realities of the war-torn past, a novel *genre* of academic *realpolitik*, this proposal was clearly consonant with Malta's long-standing frontline position and tradition on Europe's southern flank, for centuries a defender and a sentinel of European Christendom in the Ottoman advance westwards. It was an attempt to maximize on Malta's 'George Cross' credentials from the Second World War, which in 1964 were still within the living memory of most people. Borg Olivier made his administration's proposal for this Malta-based international institute on 18th December 1963. The idea itself went back to 1960 and had subsequently been the subject of a great deal of consideration and discussion in the UK. Like the rebuilding of the Royal Opera House demolished in a Nazi raid in 1942, for which Borg Olivier insisted valiantly but in vain, this institute was one of his unlucky pet proposals. In Britain, the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy examined the proposal in detail and submitted recommendations to the Minister of Science but, in the light of these recommendations, the British government reached the conclusion that "a single unitary International Institute of the kind envisaged was undesirable, and that any such International Institute should be more broadly based than on the NATO Alliance." This conclusion was announced in the British Parliament and had been made known to other governments. In these circumstances, the British government was hardly in a position to follow up the Maltese government's suggestion.⁷³

⁷² Wakefield/Kisch, 25 Mar. 1964, 926/2064.

⁷³ Wakefield/Borg Olivier, 23 Mar. 1964, 926/2064.

Contrary to the popular impression that, until Mr Mintoff gave Admiral Birindelli marching orders in June 1971, NATO had longed to retain or to increase its presence in Malta, assessments as to Malta's continuing value for NATO as a Mediterranean headquarters in the 1960s, were mixed within the NATO command itself. Malta was seen to possess mostly a negative value: it was a prize which another power bloc should be deterred by every possible means from plucking. Borg Olivier could not have been too pleased with the lukewarm responses he was getting from NATO in spite of his professed loyalty to Western principles, although all was not yet lost. As has been hinted at earlier, there was a current of opinion, not least an Italian one, which would have preferred to see the Southern command centralized in Naples, but others accepted the importance of retaining part of it in Malta. The British lobbied successfully for HAFMED to be retained in Malta, arguing that in addition to providing stability this also provided jobs and attracted spin-offs from naval visits. HAFMED in Malta could also be an arm support if not a fallback position for Britain's own continued presence in the Island after independence. Britain tried sounding out NATO on the possibility of Malta's membership of the organization. This move probably had the green light from Borg Olivier's administration in principle; and it would have been music to the ears of the Strickland, Ganado and Pellegrini parties, who were terrified of a Communist takeover spearheaded by Mintoff.

Towards the end of July 1964 the Head of the UK's Permanent Delegation to NATO, Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, had an important "private meeting" on Malta with his colleagues on the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. Shuckburgh gave them an outline of the contents of the Defence and Finance Agreements (which had just been initialled by Sandys and Borg Olivier in London). A "lengthy and involved discussion" followed, he reported back to the Foreign Office, during which a number of questions were raised. The main items raised concerned Malta's status after independence; possibilities of Malta's membership of or association with NATO; and military questions.

At the outset there was some confusion as to Malta's future relationship with the UK, Shuckburgh wrote:

I was able to clear this up by reference to Mr Sandys' statement of July 21 and by emphasising that, irrespective of the legal forms of association with the United Kingdom, Malta will become completely independent on September 25 and hence presumably a member of the United Nations.

Many permanent representatives of the NATO member states asked whether Malta would remain within the NATO area after independence:

Most of those who spoke tended to assume that it would not.

On this point Shuckburgh gave the Foreign Office's views as these had been outlined to him in a telegram dated 10th July (before any initialling of any Anglo-Maltese agreement had taken place).

As for Malta's membership of NATO, it was clear that most governments were unwilling to make up their minds at present. The most decided - and in fact the only - overt opposition to Malta's membership came from Denmark. The Danish representative had obviously already been in contact with his government because he said that "his Government would be reluctant to agree to Maltese membership." His Scandinavian neighbour, the Norwegian representative, said that "his Government would only take such a decision in the light of circumstances obtaining at the time when an application was received from an independent Maltese Government." On the other hand, the Belgian, Turkish and Greek representatives indicated that their governments would be "in favour of Maltese membership if so desired by an independent Maltese Government and the population of the Island." The country most supportive of Malta's membership seems to have been, understandably enough, Italy, since the Italian representative's interventions were described in an aside in Shuckburgh's account as "helpful throughout".

No government of a NATO member state was prepared at this stage to agree to what Britain was in fact suggesting - that contact be established between a representative of the International Staff and the Maltese Government, on grounds that not enough information

was yet available about "the possible future intentions of the Maltese Government" and "the likely conditions in the Island after independence", and "the military factors" involved. Most of the representatives who spoke asked for further indications of the views of the military authorities on the strategic importance of the Island to the NATO defence effort, and the desirability of maintaining a NATO Headquarters there.

The German representative, whose instructions had been received before the details of the Anglo-Maltese agreements were known, said that "even if the Headquarters did not remain, the most important thing was to prevent the use of the Island by a hostile power." He was not sure if this could be achieved exclusively by a bilateral agreement or even by arrangements to ensure the retention of the Headquarters. Bases "in neutral countries" could not be maintained in the long run and "did not prevent a government from being infiltrated." Malta, in the German view, "should be politically committed to the Alliance and membership would express this in the clearest form." Germany however recognized that there were many difficulties in this. The German government would not take a definite decision "before knowing the views of its Allies." Nevertheless, Germany suggested that consideration should be given to "an alternative arrangement whereby a treaty of friendship and assistance might be concluded between Malta and the members of the Alliance."

The German proposal for a Malta-NATO Treaty of Friendship and Alliance after independence, as expounded during this well attended special meeting convened at the behest of the UK's permanent representative to NATO, could be entered into "collectively or individually", and it would provide for three main undertakings, as follows:

- (a) for Malta to remain within the N.A.T.O. area for the purposes of Articles 5 and 6 of the Treaty;⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Article 5 of the NATO treaty signed in 1949 elaborates its primary purpose: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe shall

- (b) for Malta to guarantee that the N.A.T.O. Headquarters could continue to operate in the Island in peace or war; and
- (c) for detailed forms of political co-operation between Malta and the N.A.T.O. countries which could be elaborated later.

Such a treaty would be supplementary to the present Anglo-Maltese agreements.⁷⁵

For the British side, Shuckburgh said that the nature of Malta's relationship with NATO was not a purely legal question; it would depend on what kind of future relationship the Council wanted, adding:

In the negotiations for Maltese independence, we had done our best to ensure that she remained within the Western

be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them... will assist the Party or Parties so attacked... to secure and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." In terms of geographical area, the treaty covered Europe and North America, the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer, and the Mediterranean. In the mid-sixties NATO was re-establishing the balance of power in Europe and reorganizing military strength on the basis of nuclear power. The member states then were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, West Germany (1955), Greece (1952), Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey (1952), the UK and the U.S.A. Spain only joined in 1982, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999 (just before the most recent Balkan war, over Kosovo).

⁷⁵ On this see ff. 2-3 in Shuckburgh's five page report, 26 July 1964, sec., telegraphed to the Foreign Office and Whitehall, repeated for information to Washington, Rome, Malta and the Holy See. Members present at a meeting of the NATO Council held in Paris on 24 July 1964, under the chairmanship of Mr D. U. Stikker, were MM. A. de Staercke (Belgium), G. Ignatieff (Canada), Per Groot (Denmark), François Seydoux (France), W. G. Grewe (Germany), C. X. Palamas (Greece), T. A. Tómasson (Iceland), A. Alessandrini (Italy), P. Reuter (Luxembourg), H. N. Boon (Netherlands), G. Kristiansen (Norway), d'Oliveira Neves (Portugal), Nuri Birgi (Turkey) and T. K. Finletter (U.S.A.), in addition to four 'International Staff' members and one other. NATO Arch.

camp. We should have forces stationed there, which would be something. But the problem was not one which in our view could be solved by a bilateral treaty alone. We could not say that we felt happy about the future of the Island simply on the basis of our treaty with the Maltese, which, in our view, needed additional support. When Malta became independent there might be a break with the Alliance; the Headquarters might be removed and the NATO commitment cease; this would be very discouraging to the friends of the West in the Island...

There was clearly a range of solutions whereby this could be avoided, the British representative held. The "most extreme was membership", as he put it, but the discussion "tended rather to confirm our view that this would present difficulties for some countries." Less extreme solutions ought to be considered and in this context Dr Grewe's proposals were "of great interest" and would be studied. At all events it was important to avoid a break at the moment of independence. Shuckburgh did not agree with those who had suggested that the formulation of a NATO view on the problem could be left until later. For this reason the British were anxious that

a representative of the International Staff should go to Malta. He would be able to disabuse Dr Olivier of any exaggerated views he might have of the attitude of the Council either on the question of membership or the retention of the Headquarters, and would also be able to gain some impression of the thinking of the future Maltese Government. This would only be a first step, after which further consultation would have to take place in the Council.⁷⁶

After further discussion and a summing up by Mr Stikker, who emphasised the urgency of reaching decisions, the meeting agreed on three courses of action. First, the NATO military authorities

⁷⁶ Shuckburgh rep., 26 July 1964, sec., *op.cit.*, ff. 3-4.

would be asked urgently for an assessment of the military factors. Second, studies should be undertaken by the International Staff, with the assistance of the UK and Mr de Staercke in his capacity of Doyen, of the implications of Maltese membership, or of any form of association, with NATO. Third, no decision should yet be taken about the member of the International Staff visiting Malta.

In a final intervention the British representative urged that the Council should not hide behind the idea that there were important military questions to be answered. The military requirement in respect of Malta could be stated simply: it was "to deny the Island to a hostile power." This was "primarily a political question."

At the end of the meeting the Dutch representative suggested that it might be helpful if Her Majesty's Representative in Malta could be authorised to tell the Maltese Government that the problems of their future association with NATO were being carefully studied by the Council and that further discussions would be held with them in due course. Dr Boon said that it was important to take account of the susceptibilities of an emerging country and to prevent them from feeling "overlooked or unwanted". Curiously, the U.S. representative took no part whatsoever in the discussion. It was suspected that this was because while the U.S. Government was opposed to Maltese membership of NATO, they did not wish to take the lead in saying so. "It may well be", Shuckburgh surmised, "that the hesitations of other delegations are based on the same reasoning and that a lead from us might produce more positive results."⁷⁷ The British and the Americans were at odds - over having Malta in NATO. The subject of Malta's relations with NATO was however pursued in subsequent meetings of the North Atlantic Council, of which the Maltese side was not to be informed ⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 5.

⁷⁸ The UK Commissioner made a fuss because a NATO *communiqué* was addressed from Paris, by mistake, to Dorman (who was in England) instead of to Wakefield. Worse and worse, it had been opened by Dorman's secretary, a Maltese, who remembered

In fact Malta was discussed in the North Atlantic Council a number of times between July and September 1964 until it was finally decided during private sessions of the Council held on the 4th, 7th and 10th September 1964, not to have her either as a member or even as an associate member of the organization, while still retaining her, however, as the Headquarters for Allied Forces Mediterranean (HAFMED) for the time being. The main opponent of any statutory association of Malta with NATO was France, closely followed by Denmark, although the Americans themselves never favoured membership while other member states had misgivings given Malta's size, and uncertainty about her political orientation and reliability in future. France's objection to any addition to the 15 member states of NATO was leaked and syndicated by Reuter's news agency three days before Malta's Independence. France believed that if Malta were to somehow join NATO, that would have strengthened Britain's hand in the organization.⁷⁹

opening this envelope and taking out "a savingram from Paris about NATO and Malta." Telegrams repeated to Malta "should be sent to the UK Commission not to the Governor, unless there are specific reasons otherwise... The fact remains that savingram 21 has been seen by a Maltese secretary to the Governor, and this amounts to a very bad breach of security." Watt/Kisch, 13 Aug. 1964, sec., 926/2064. In a memorandum MED. 601/176/02, 21 Aug. 1964, it was explained to E.J.W. Barnes at the F.O. that "the Governor of Malta holds a unique position in that he is *not* a representative of the British Government and that the equivalent of the normal Colonial Governor is in Malta the U.K. Commissioner to whom all correspondence should be sent." The F.O. cabled the UK Delegation to NATO, Paris, 25 Aug. 1964, repeated for information to Washington, Ottawa, Lisbon, Oslo, Rome, Ankara, Copenhagen, The Hague, Brussels, Luxembourg, Bonn, Athens and the Holy See: "In order to avoid a risk of any leak to the Maltese about the current negotiations in the N.A. Council on Malta's relations with NATO, it is important that all letters and telegrams, copies of which are to be sent to Malta, should be addressed to 'United Kingdom Commission Malta'. See Barnes/Kisch, 26 Aug. 1964, 926/2064. The UK Commission in Floriana were obsessed by the possibility of any classified information on Malta being spotted by "Maltese eyes". The person in charge of their registry, Mr A. Curmi, who opened inward mail, was guilty of having once done that. "Mr Curmi has now left the office and been replaced by Mr M. J. Lonsdale from the Colonial Office. There is now no risk of classified material being seen by Maltese eyes..." Barrett/Darby, 19 May 1964, 926/2064.

⁷⁹ 'Franza Ma Tridix Lil Malta Fin-NATO', *l-orizzont*, 19 Sept. 1964, p.1.

A Malta Working Group was however set up in by the North Atlantic Council in August, 1964, and there was every intention that some effective liaison could be retained with Malta, although it soon became clear that such a liaison would fall far short of membership or even associate membership, which would have constituted a precedent by way of a *sui generis* statutory arrangement. In a circular enclosing the revised terms of reference of the Malta Working Group, Permanent Representatives accredited to NATO were urged by the Secretary General, Manlio Brosio, "to begin work as soon as possible" and "to accelerate the proceedings".⁸⁰ After various hypothetical possibilities and suggested drafts regarding Malta's possible inclusion in NATO, which were largely of a tentative or perfunctory nature, Brosio communicated to the Permanent Representatives a wishy-washy decision on the subject of Malta taken at their private meeting on 16th September, which left the door open to discussions about NATO's future relationship with Malta on Independence. It authorised HAFMED not to sack those members of its staff who would lose their British citizenship on Independence Day and, subject to confirmation by the U.S. Delegation, agreed that a group of legal advisers meet to advise on aspects of a long-term arrangement "short of full membership" between NATO and Malta.⁸¹

Following an exchange between Tyler and Rusk on 31st July, 1964, wherein it was stated that the United States agreed with the United Kingdom that after independence it would be undesirable for Malta to be either a member or an associate member of NATO, a dissenting opinion was expressed in the form of a "personal comment on a wholly informal basis". This was by Mr McG. Bundy, President Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, who had

⁸⁰ 'Malta - Terms of Reference for Malta Working Group', Brosio/Permanent Representatives, 21 Aug. 1964, sec., NATO Archives, Brussels. Archives declassified on 19 May 1999 to coincide with NATO's 50th anniversary, do not include the record of NAC private sessions, during which the Malta case was discussed. Bin/Frendo, 2 Aug. 1999.

⁸¹ Brosio/Permanent Representatives, 18 Sept. 1964, conf., NATO Archives.

been following with interest the Paris discussions on future NATO arrangements with an independent Malta. In a letter to the U.S. Under Secretary of State (Ball), Bundy wrote thus:

Given the Cyprus experience and the fact that elements in the Maltese political picture could produce a Cyprus-like problem there, I think an effective case can be made for a NATO tie and the establishment of a NATO presence *before* the island is given its independence and before this matter becomes enmeshed in internal Maltese politics... If, subsequently, difficulties do develop, NATO then will be in a position to deal with them in terms that make most sense to the West.⁸²

The Department of State's position, as officially expressed by Dean Rusk, continued to be that a North Atlantic Council consensus be reached favourable to the retention of NATO's HQ in Malta "through some form of association with Malta". The U.S. Government, Rusk cabled NATO and the European Regional Organizations in January 1965, was "not aware" that Borg Olivier was "seriously embarrassed now by the presence of Headquarters and lack of NATO relationship".⁸³

By the third week of July 1964, an Anglo-Maltese defence and finance deal had been clinched. Immediately afterwards it was

⁸² Bundy/Ball, Washington, 27 Aug. 1964, Dept. of State, Central Files, NATO 6 MALTA, Sec., in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. xiii, Western Europe Region (eds. C.S.Sampson and G.W.LaFantasie, Washington, 1995), p.68.

⁸³ Rusk tel., Washington., 18 Jan. 1965, *ibid.*, pp. 181-182. Rusk was uninformed. Borg Olivier had indeed expected better. When nothing came of Malta's expectation that in return for hosting HAFMED she would get something substantial in return and in particular have some say in NATO affairs, Borg Olivier in the third week of April 1971 (before the general election which returned Mintoff's party was called) wrote to NATO intimating that they could leave. J.A. Mizzi confided to this author that he had seen Borg Olivier's letter to NATO and double checked on it with Michael Shaw from the British High Commission and the Attorney General Edgar Mizzi before having a news item carried in *The Daily Telegraph*.

debated and passed - without as much as a division on the third reading - at Westminster. Any additional relationships in foreign and defence policy - bilateral, multilateral, complementary, supplementary or otherwise - would then be for Malta to decide and to negotiate, as best she might, after her Independence.

On 6th July there were five matters still outstanding in the negotiations, of varying degrees of importance. The British finally gave up on the first one of these - changing Malta's long-standing electoral law to prohibit what they called 'corrupt practices' - following Borg Olivier's "no". The second, on the question of special assurances regarding nuclear weapons in Malta, had been thrashed out through a 'lovers' code' stratagem at Chequers on 11th July.

The second was intimately tied to the first, in fact. It was following Borg Olivier's waiver with regard to nuclear arms in Malta that the British dropped their insistence on changing the electoral law; this *quid pro quo* was very much a part of the deal, as the relevant Cabinet paper made clear.⁸⁴

The third pending matter concerned the connection between the Financial Agreement and the Defence Agreement. After Chequers, a compromise was reached here too, by untying the agreements for the first three out of the ten years for which they were intended to last. No discourtesy was thus shown to Borg Olivier for the time that he was due to be in office; his trustworthiness had been tried and was thus rewarded. As a matter of fact, most of the monies would be due under the best terms earlier rather than later in the decade 1964-1974. It was mostly against some maverick Mintooff comeback that the British really wanted to insure. That was not foreseen before 1966 and probably, if ever, not before the early 1970s.

The fourth outstanding matter had long been bandied about with the Treasury and it was where the penny dropped: the total amount

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the British Cabinet's final decision on granting Malta independence, see below, p. 635.

of financial aid for capital expenditure, and emigration. And the fifth, where Borg Olivier came up a cropper, was rebuilding the Royal Opera House in the entrance to Malta's capital: this, built on designs by Barry of Covent Garden fame, and then rehabilitated after a fire in the 19th century - for a few generations the pride and joy of upper and middle classes alike - had been razed to the ground by the Germans in 1942, and there it lay - and still it lies - in ruins. But in the middle of a Services rundown and on the eve of a tricky independence for a onetime 'fortress colony', which had anyway received war damage funds, a new opera house was seen in London, in the second half of the twentieth century, as a costly luxury, even as an absurdity. It was dismissed outright by the Treasury and never given due consideration.⁸⁵ Malta would have her George Cross, but not her Royal Opera House. However, by the end of the negotiations, an additional sum would be made available for the restoration of damaged buildings on sites held by the Services.

These "not yet settled" main points were actually identified and starkly listed by Sandys himself in a draft letter intended for Borg Olivier, but which in fact was not issued, bearing the date of 6th July, 1964. In that draft, the contents of which must have been conveyed orally and then brought up in discussion, probably on the day, Sandys said he would be glad to discuss these matters further with Borg Olivier, and suggested they should arrange one further meeting on that day "to see if we can reach agreement before it is too late to introduce the Bill this Session."⁸⁶

By 8th July D. G. Gordon-Smith was in a position to send J. J. Cremona the latest print of the Malta Independence Bill. Prints of the draft Constitution prepared for the purposes of the White Paper had not yet emerged from the printers. In order to avoid renumbering of all sections from 47 onwards in consequence of the

⁸⁵ On Borg Olivier's Royal Opera House claim, see above, esp. I, 4.

⁸⁶ Sandys/Borg Olivier, 6 July 1964, with "Did not issue" written in hand in large letters across the top of the left-hand corner of the document, 926/1916/48583.

new section about discrimination, the solicitors transferred Cremona's earlier section 45 to section 42, renumbering 46 as 45, and inserted the new section as 46.⁸⁷ Even as the negotiations on still outstanding matters continued in earnest, the British administrative machine was in full gear to make it in time for the last parliamentary sessions before dissolution.

They only just made it. The private secretary of Sandys, N. B. J. Huijsman, wrote to Sir John Martin as late as 20th July to say that Sandys was having "protracted discussions" with Borg Olivier, "with the aim of reaching agreement on Malta's Independence Constitution, and the defence and financial arrangements which would operate after independence." Mr Sandys' aim "has been", Huijsman added, "to reach agreement in sufficient time to enable a Bill providing for Malta's independence to be introduced before the end of this Session." Unfortunately, the pace of the negotiations had been "a good deal slower than customary", in part owing to "the reluctance of the Prime Minister of Malta to accept that undue prolongation of the discussions would create Parliamentary difficulties." The position reached "by the end of last week" was that, unless the Bill was introduced "this week, and assured of unopposed passage in Parliament, it could not be passed this Session." It now looked as if that difficulty might be resolved.

Before the legislation could be introduced, two submissions had to be made to the Queen. The first would advise Her Majesty that Malta should enter independence as a monarchy with the Queen as Sovereign. The second would invite the surrender by Her Majesty of Her prerogatives and interests in so far as these were affected by the Malta Independence Bill. The Secretary of State had signed the two submissions, "although certain points still remain to be settled with Dr Borg Olivier before the Bill can actually be introduced."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Gordon-Smith/Cremona, 8 July 1964, 926/1916/48583.

⁸⁸ Huijsman/Martin, 20 July 1964, copied to Lt.-Col. The Hon. Sir Martin Charteris, 926/1916/48583.



One of the many civil service delegations travelling on government business as the Independence negotiations and Malta's economic diversification drive proceeded apace. From left: Mr Maurice Abela (left), Mr Alfred Salomone, who became financial secretary in 1962, heading the delegation, and Mr Alfred Wirth. Civil servants with a background in statistics, economics or finance were increasingly needed at this stage.

On Thursday 16th July, however - in between the Chequers meeting and the first reading of the Malta Independence Bill - Sandys was telling Borg Olivier that the Constitution and the Defence Agreement as negotiated were acceptable to the British Government. He was also announcing to him that the amount of aid to be made available under the Financial Agreement would be no less than £50,000,000 over ten years, actually even a little more than that. On 17th July Sandys was due to speak to the Leader of the Opposition, and get back to Borg Olivier with Wilson's reaction. On Monday 20th, on his return to London after the weekend, Wilson confirmed to Sandys that the Opposition agreed to a parliamentary

time-table which would allow the Bill on Malta to go through the Commons, and later through the Lords, before the House rose.⁸⁹

The details of the Financial Agreement, as of the Defence Agreement, would be announced in parliament and laid on the table of the House on Tuesday 21st July. Briefly, it was agreed that Britain would provide Malta with assistance towards her capital budget and emigration up to a total of £50,000,000, of which £6,800,000 would be provided during the current financial year. Moreover, £18,800,000 could be withdrawn in the first three years, the period during which the Financial Agreement was to be untied to the Defence Agreement, whereas the funds for the first five years were to be drawn as to 75% in the form of grants and 25% in the form of soft loans. In addition, Britain undertook to provide up to one million pounds for the restoration of historical buildings in Malta now occupied by British forces. This could have been a sop to make good for dismissing Borg Olivier's more expensive opera house project, but it was something.

Following persistent claims by Borg Olivier and exchanges of correspondence with him, Britain was also undertaking to provide budgetary assistance of up to £600,000 in the financial year 1964-1965. The Prime Minister of Malta had sought a firm commitment that budgetary aid would be provided for as long as it might be needed, which he foresaw would be the end of the financial year 1970-1971. He was told that, while the British government could not enter into any advance commitment as regards budgetary aid for future years, it would be prepared to consider any requests for such aid which the Malta government might from time to time make.

The terms of the Financial Agreement became well known and, on the whole, were considered generous - if not over-generous - in Britain, for a departing colony. More than one British MP made this point. Behind the scenes, the Colonial Office, in support of the Borg

⁸⁹ E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, p. 39. No sooner had it done so than George Brown, Labour's deputy leader, went up to the gallery of the House of Commons to congratulate and embrace Borg Olivier, Ragonesi recalls: "How could we stop Malta from getting her Independence?" he told him.



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DUS/101.66/64.

5th June, 1964.

Aid to Malta

Horton asked, at the meeting which Devereux attended this morning, for an outline of a paper for the D.O.P.C. on the possible increased use of Malta for defence. I understand that, bearing in mind the urgency and the extent to which we are "stretched" at present because of the current negotiations, it might suffice if I were to give you, for the benefit of Treasury Ministers, a few paragraphs summarizing the situation as we see it.

2. The full extent to which defence facilities in Malta might be needed cannot be accurately assessed until our future position in Cyprus and Libya is clarified; our thoughts have, however, naturally turned more towards Malta as a means of meeting our future commitments should either or both of these bases be denied to us.

3. On the basis of current commitments, the Chiefs of Staff recently concluded that additional facilities, to offset the consequences of losing those in Cyprus and Libya, could, and would have to, be provided as follows:-

- a. Additional staging facilities at Luqa.
- b. The retention and development of Hal Far as an operational airfield.
- c. Storage space for a reorganised TMAAG stockpile and accommodation for its maintenance personnel.
- d. Communications required for strategic purposes and contingency plans.
- e. SIGINT facilities to the greatest extent possible.
- f. Increased naval forward operating facilities.
- g. Possibly some increase in existing Army and Royal Air Force Headquarters.

4. Because of the uncertainties no accurate measure of the future usefulness of Malta to defence is possible at this stage; the proposed additional £1m. a year proposed by the Colonial Office can, however, be regarded as a reasonable

reflection ...

P.H.F. Dodd, Esq.,
H.M. Treasury,
S.W.1.

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What this Wright/Dodd exchange of 5th June 1964 shows is that Malta's resumed strategic importance due to the troubles in Cyprus and Libya strengthened the hand of the Ministry of Defence, the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Office and the Foreign Office in resisting Treasury pressures to cut down the proposed aid package, and instead to have it topped up.

Olivier stance, had been lobbying the Treasury - and the Ministry of Defence for support with the Treasury - in order to increase the monies originally intended for Malta. The argument being pushed by the Sandys camp, and supported by the M.O.D., was a fairly simple one: now that Britain's defence need of Malta was increasing, you dip your hands further into the till. To extract money out of Treasury, as every cabinet minister knows, is a formidable task, and to extract more than would have been intended or recommended, is still more so. Using the growing defence need and other arguments, the Colonial Office made a strong bid for an additional one million pounds per year for Malta. Typically the Treasury were not easily swayed. They double checked with the Ministry of Defence. While being unable, because of uncertainties, accurately to measure "the future usefulness of Malta to defence" at that stage, the latter told Mr P. H. F. Dodd at the Treasury, "the proposed additional £1m. a year proposed by the Colonial Office" could, however, be regarded as "a reasonable reflection" of the changed position.

Summarizing the situation as they saw it, for the benefit of Treasury Ministers, and in view of a request made on the morning of 5th June, that a paper on the possible increased use of Malta for Defence be laid before the D.O.P.C., the Ministry of Defence stated the position succinctly and firmly.

Although the full extent to which defence facilities in Malta might be needed could not be accurately assessed until Britain's future position in Cyprus and Libya were clarified, "our thoughts have, however, naturally turned more towards Malta as a means of meeting our future commitments should either or both of these bases be denied to us." Quoting the conclusions of the Chiefs of Staff, the M.O.D. recapitulated how losses in Cyprus and Libya would be offset by Malta in seven ways. These were additional staging facilities at Luqa; the retention and development of Hal Far as an operational airfield; storage space for a reorganized TUXEDO stockpile and accommodation for its maintenance personnel; communications required for strategic purposes and contingency plans; SIGINT facilities to the greatest extent possible; increased naval forward operating facilities; and possibly some increase in existing Army and R.A.F. Headquarters.

This, following the D.O.P.C. meeting, and no doubt with Cabinet approval, put paid to a Treasury proposal that the Independence aid package to Malta be cut down to £29,500,000.⁹⁰

Where did that sum come from? £29,250,000 was the sum that Britain, which provided no recurrent assistance to the Malta budget, had promised earlier in grants and loans, including £7,250,000 for the conversion of the Dockyard, during the course of the current Development Plan which ended on 31st March 1964. In the summer of 1962 the Development Plan had been “redeployed” to bring up expenditure from c. £4,000,000 to c. £6,000,000 a year for the last fifteen months of it. In 1958, £25,000,000 had been offered (and, in the circumstances, rejected) in capital grant, plus one million a year for the cost of social services, again over a five year period. Borg Olivier had refused to commit himself on an over-all Financial Agreement then, before the conclusions of the Joint Study and the Stolper Report would have been concluded, and the British side had agreed to that. A new Development Plan would also be drawn up, as had by now been done. Borg Olivier had also objected to “a once-for-all separation endowment.” He wanted, British officials had commented incisively already at the time, “assistance continuing *ad infinitum*”. They, on the other hand, wanted “to be able to see the end of it, even if it cannot be immediate”. What Borg Olivier wanted was, commented another official, “a pension payable indefinitely.”

In the meantime, Borg Olivier had been insisting on both extending the limit for his budget day and having the budget itself supplemented by extra British funds to make good for the deficit.

The proposed Agreement on Financial Assistance⁹¹ contained a preamble and seven short articles. The presumption in the preamble which referred to both the financial and defence agreements was tied down in article 7, which began thus:

⁹⁰ Wright/Dodd, 5 June 1964, sec., 926/1857/48655.

⁹¹ Cmnd. 2423, H.M.S.O., London, July 1964.

During the ten years beginning on the 1st April 1964, but subject at all times to the continued operation of the Agreement on Mutual Defence and Assistance, the Government of the United Kingdom will make available to the Government of Malta...

This last article mentioned an additional £1,000,000 towards expenditure on the restoration of historic buildings. Nothing in the Agreement was to be construed as implying any obligation on the part of the Malta Government in respect of the repayment of any part of the advances made to Bailey (Malta) Ltd by the UK Government, but sums issued by the UK Government between 1st April 1964 and the signature of this Agreement, including sums for the civil dockyard conversion plan, would be regarded as drawings on the sum of £6,800,000 specified in article 1.⁹²

Sandys went to parliament armed with argumentation and answers to any questions that were sure to arise, particularly from the Labour benches. His draft briefs anticipated these and included recommended answers to a number of such points. On why the electoral observers' report about the independence referendum had not been published: because the referendum

added nothing to what we already knew about the differing opinions in Malta. The results did not therefore influence our conclusions. Consequently I do not see any advantage in attempting to analyse the vote or in publishing the Observers' Report, which was in any case confidential.

On why more consultations with the Maltese political parties had not been held: because

After months of fruitless discussion, it was clear that the Maltese parties were never likely to reach agreement among themselves. However, the new constitution with the

⁹² *Ibid.*, f.2.

important amendments which have been made, represents in my view, a fair and reasonable compromise.

On changing the electoral law to eliminate 'corrupt practices', as it was alleged that the present law did not provide sufficient protection against the exercise of undue influence at elections:

The fact is that those who complain about the law have so far never put it to the test by bringing a case to court. The law governing corrupt electoral practices is not part of the constitution, and responsibility for deciding on these matters was conferred long ago upon the legislature of Malta. As far as I know there is no precedent for making changes of this kind in the electoral law of territories before Independence.

In view of the ecclesiastical aspect of the problem, he had

consulted the Archbishop of Malta and the Apostolic Delegate in London. They have informed me that the Catholic authorities see no objection to the amendments we have made.

The date of Independence had not yet been fixed, but it would probably be in September.⁹³

Various points were prepared in reply to any suggestions that fresh elections should have been held, or should still be held, before Independence, on the ground that (as claimed by the MLP) the earlier elections or even the referendum had been unfair.

All the Committee of 24 at the UN had recommended on 10th May 1963 was that the people of Malta had a right to independence;

⁹³ Notes in point form edited on a typed draft preceeding the Malta debate, enc. 926/1916/48583. The date for Independence would be appointed by the Queen in Council in due course. See below, esp. III, 17.

Britain was invited to hold an all-party conference to consider the independence question, including the question of holding general elections in the presence of international observers, and that the earliest possible date be set for independence.

In a statement made on the case of British Guiana in October 1963 Sandys had made the point that if it were proposed to retain the existing electoral system, "there would be no justification for holding fresh elections" before independence. However, as (there, but not in Malta) the system was to be changed, he had added, it was clearly right that "fresh elections under the new system" should be held before independence.

As for allegations that the 1962 and the 1964 elections and referendum in Malta were unfair, such allegations rested on hearsay or circumstantial evidence. No direct evidence was ever produced, the advice continued, nor was any case brought before the courts "as one might well have expected." In regard to the referendum, the Archbishop had expressly issued a circular letter to be read in every Church indicating that as far as the Church was concerned the referendum was an entirely political matter and that "all Catholics were free to vote according to their conscience." There had been allegations that, despite this, individual priests used undue influence but again no case had been brought before the courts. The Observers' report thought that the appeal by the Nationalist Party that "your Church is in danger" and the activities and the attitude of the Church generally amounted in the circumstances of Malta to "a threat of spiritual injury", and they alleged that they had hard evidence of one or two priests having misused the confessional, adding however that: "While one or two priests may have done this, we are very doubtful whether there was undue influence by the Church in general though the Nationalist Party certainly played effectively on the emotions of the faithful."

With regard to the suggestion that could be made that at the next general election, whenever it was held, there should be supervision by the United Nations or someone else, the line to be taken in reply, as indicated, was that Malta would by then be "a sovereign country"

and it was "not a matter on which we could make a stipulation." It would be for Malta "to decide for herself". In a further and final bit of advice on this question, it was tentatively suggested that Sandys might perhaps express "our willingness to send a team of British observers if so requested by the Maltese Government", but it was thought probably better not to say this.⁹⁴

The timing was so tight, and the successful passage of the Malta bill at the very end of the Session being now important, that Sandys needed to be fully briefed and on the alert in the forthcoming debate, which could still take strange turns. He could ill afford to be caught on the wrong foot.

On Tuesday 21st July Sandys in the Commons and then Lansdowne in the Lords made much the same statement about Malta. Sandys announced that that morning he had completed the long negotiations with the Government of Malta on the question of independence. As a result, they had now "settled the form" of Malta's future Constitution. The Government of Malta had expressed the desire that Malta should remain a Monarchy with Her Majesty as Queen; they had informed him that they intended to seek membership of the Commonwealth.

That morning, too, they had initialled agreements on defence and financial aid which were to be signed on independence. The Defence Agreement would enable British forces to remain in Malta for 10 years. Under the Finance Agreement, Britain would, during the same period, provide capital aid for the development and the diversification of the economy and assistance for emigration, up to a total of about £50 million. The text of the new Constitution was being published on that day as a White Paper; and

⁹⁴ Brief entitled 'Malta - Elections and the U.N. Resolution', in four sections edited on a typed draft, enc. *ibid.* One reason why the Observers' report was not published could have been that it did not quite constitute a *nihil obstat*: it suggested at one point that "a threat of spiritual injury" may have existed, owing perhaps not so much to the behaviour of the Church as to that of the Nationalist Party.

a limited number of cyclostyled advance copies of the two agreements would be available in the Vote Office. Despite the small amount of parliamentary time that remained, he hoped that the House would feel disposed to pass the necessary Independence Bill before the Recess. He realised that this was asking a lot of hon. Members but, as they knew, Malta's independence had already had to be postponed beyond the target date of 31st May. It was therefore most desirable not to delay further, any longer than was necessary.

In reply to questions, Sandys did not think they could look beyond 10 years although during that time they could "consider any arrangements beyond that date". The Constitution contained a large chapter on fundamental human rights. As a result of these negotiations, that chapter had been "further strengthened". An additional non-discrimination clause had been inserted and amendments had been made which should be found acceptable. Replying to Tom Driberg, whose interruptions mingled with sneers and jeers regarding the Catholic Church in no way edified the House of Commons, Sandys said that these amendments made to strengthen the human rights provisions had been "fully approved by the ecclesiastical authorities in Malta".

On the referendum and the observers' report, Sandys repeated that the referendum "did not really tell us anything new that we did not already know about the differences which existed among the Maltese parties" on this question, and it had not, therefore, "influenced the conclusions which we have reached." Pressed by Gordon Walker, Sandys retained the observers' report to have been a confidential one but he would consider whether it ought to be published. Rising to congratulate the government, as Mr Wingfield Digby had already done before him, Mr Patrick Wall asked if the Defence Agreement meant a check on the rundown, and if the litigation with Baileys could be completed and got out of the way, Sandys did not think there was any prospect that the dockyard litigation would be completed at an early date. The Defence Agreement would not "affect our military plans except that if there had not been a military agreement we would have had to withdraw our forces altogether." Replying to the Liberal leader Jo Grimond again on the human

rights question, Sandys explained that in the main the sanction was that "any law or anything done under any law in contravention of human rights" would be "invalidated". That was the main sanction, and it was the normal sanction in all human rights codes. This followed closely the human rights provisions in other constitutions. As for the referendum, everybody voted more or less according to their party affiliations. Sir William Teeling asked Sandys if he would agree that "both we and Malta owe a great debt of gratitude to the Prime Minister of Malta for having waited here for nine weeks" at a time when he, no doubt, wanted to be at home looking after his own affairs, realising that "my right hon. Friend was busy on other matters", Sandys replied curtly and tellingly:

I think that the Prime Minister of Malta has shown great patience; but so have I.

When Mrs Judith Hart and Mrs Barbara Castle from the Labour benches complained that they had not had enough time to examine the constitution and the two agreements, about which they wanted to put questions, the Speaker said these could be debated on the Bill. He invited the Lord Privy Seal, Mr Selwyn Lloyd, to indicate the order of business. In view of the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies, the business of the House for Thursday 23rd July and Monday 27th July had been rearranged. On Thursday, there would be a second reading of the Malta Independence Bill after which, in view of the urgency, the House would be asked to take the remaining stages. Mr George Brown said many Members on both sides of the House would have a number of issues to raise so that "putting the Malta Independence Bill through in one day" would be a very difficult operation and "the day may have to be protracted". Lloyd appreciated this and they were asking a great deal of the House to do this, but they would not have asked it were it not in the interests of Britain "and perhaps more in the interests of Malta" that the Bill should go through as quickly as possible. Castle said this was "intolerable".

During the debate on the second reading starting on 23rd July, using much the same arguments already made in earlier debate and

questions put, the Opposition moved an amendment asking that fresh elections be held in Malta before independence would be given. The Government parried these criticisms with familiar and by now almost stock replies: such a delay at this stage, after a general election and referendum, would be unnecessary and harmful. On 26th July the House agreed that independence be given to Malta immediately by 141 votes to 85, approving the Bill through all its stages⁹⁵ The British Labour party had already agreed not to obstruct the passage of the bill, but they wanted to show at least a token support for their 'sister' Labour Party of Malta, even if they may not have seen eye to eye with it on everything. From Malta, Agatha Barbara (and Philip Muscat) had gone to London and kicked up a fuss about the prevalent lack of consultation.⁹⁶ The Opposition in Malta - like that in Britain - had had the final version of the constitution and of the agreements on defence and finance sprung upon them, although they would have had some idea of what was going on.

The debates in the House of Lords, on all sides, were less party political and rather more instructive in nature, although it was here that the only attempt to stop Malta's independence altogether was made. The Earl of Perth, who had been much involved with the Integration round table conference in the mid-1950s, could not accept "the idea of Malta standing on its own as an independent island". The House should decline to give the Bill a Second Reading until the Maltese people had been consulted either through new elections or by a referendum. There was "little or no evidence", he said, that the people of Malta wanted "independence now". The referendum had not been held on this question. By contrast, Integration, on the basis of economic equivalence, had been voted upon and accepted in both Houses:

Unhappily, integration failed five years ago, and it failed because the then Prime Minister, Mr Mintoff, put forward

⁹⁵ Hansard, Commons, 23 July, 26 July 1964, *passim*.

⁹⁶ E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, p. 39; but see below, pp. 668-669.

new demands just at the very moment of success - new demands for money, new demands for guaranteed employment - and the Government at that time felt that this was both unreasonable and unfair. I was myself Minister of State for the Colonies at the time, and I fully supported in every way the Government's decision. But, my Lords, I have often since wondered whether I was right.⁹⁷

In winding up the debate, the Marquess of Lansdowne referred to the amendment moved by the Earl of Perth, recalling how much he had done for Malta when he (Perth) occupied the position which he (Lansdowne) now held, but his speech seemed to be a "nostalgic" one, regretting that Integration had failed. To stop Malta's Independence at the eleventh hour would be to delay Malta's economic development foreseen under the Finance Agreement and to arouse grave political suspicions about Britain's intentions. The Prime Minister of Malta had just returned to that country, he added, "and received a very warm welcome indeed."⁹⁸

Concern that, were Independence delayed or postponed, Maltese public opinion would swing against Britain, was a main reason given in Cabinet to proceed with Independence after the referendum, in spite of lingering doubts as to what its result meant exactly. "Undue delay", as a synoptic Cabinet minute put it in July, "would unite the parties in Malta in opposition to the United Kingdom". The Cabinet also noted that Dr Borg Olivier had been willing to sign a defence agreement "containing no restrictions on our entitlement to use our base in the Island for the storage of nuclear weapons". They had therefore endeavoured to reach agreement with the Prime Minister of Malta on the basis that "we would abandon our earlier insistence on a change in Maltese electoral law provided we secured an agreement including the rights to store nuclear weapons in Malta if necessary".⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Hansard, Lords, 28 July 1964, cols. 987-989.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, col. 1039.

⁹⁹ 26(3), 134, 37 and 38 (6), Cab 128-129, sec.

In a replica of the motion in the Commons, two Labour peers moved that Her Majesty's Government should continue to have responsibility for the government of Malta until the Maltese legislative assembly had been dissolved and a general election held there. In the course of the debate Lord Farrington recalled his presence in Malta during the 1962 general election and in view of "the atmosphere" there at the time, he did not regard "the present Maltese Government as having a mandate from the Maltese people." However, there was consensus that the financial agreement had been a very generous one and that Malta deserved to be treated in this privileged way. Equally there was general satisfaction at the defence agreement reached. The Labour amendment, by agreement, was negated without a vote being taken.

Most impressive and indeed touching were the memories and impressions of Malta, her history and architecture, the natural beauty of her harbours, the loyalty and heroism demonstrated in wartime, the warmth and welcoming friendliness of her people - which one Member of the House after another gave vent to, evoking a shared past stretching back to the 1920s and still earlier, in an untypically British sentimental chain of recollections. Even the Bishop of Chester, who somewhat veered the whole discussion to a tangent by his ecclesiastical worries on "disability", could not refrain from bringing up such fine memories. Another peer recalled a special service in St John's, only a year earlier, led by the representatives of different Christian denominations including the Catholics there, in which they had all together recited The Lord's Prayer in English. All this, particularly for so many of the more elderly MPs in the upper chamber, who had known Malta often in different ways for so long, comes across as a genuine parting; feelings were truly torn. Malta had been part and parcel of their own lives. Among those who spoke were Lord Thurlow, who had just served as General Officer Commanding in Malta, and Admiral Lord Glasgow, having only recently been the Flag Officer at Malta. For the Malta debate in the House of Commons, Sir Winston Churchill, who was ninety years old, made a rare appearance - more eloquent and conspicuous than ever by his dignified and venerable silence. It would be his last one there.



(Above) Crowds at the airport terminal and (left) milling around its precincts, gave the Prime Minister a greater welcome than usual on 26th July 1964, when it was known that the Malta Independence Bill had passed the House of Commons and a finance-defence package had finally

been agreed upon. It was on this occasion that Borg Olivier first mentioned 21st September as Independence Day. The poster in the centre shows The Queen with the words "Viva Malta Indipendenti" and the names "Castro", "Kruschev" and "Nasser" crossed out. The poster on the right says that Mintoff's "six points" had vanished (*ghosfru*).



The Prime Minister addressing a press conference in the company of every member of his Cabinet. From left: Ministers Caruana, Caruana Demajo, Felice, Paris, Spiteri, Cachia Zammit and Paolo Borg Olivier. *Below:* The poster reads: "Welcome to you our father. Malta cradle of Mediterranean civilization rejoices for you and with you."



On the night, Sandys invited the Malta delegation to his London flat for dinner, where he showed Borg Olivier a cable from the smaller parties promising their cooperation to make a success of Independence.¹⁰⁰

On 26th July, as soon as the Malta Independence Bill had gone through the Commons, Borg Olivier returned to Malta to a hero's welcome. In the words of an American historian writing at the time, he

found the airport made festive with flags, flowers, and greens. He was greeted by prolonged shouts of welcome that even drowned the roar of the engines of his airplane. Along the route from the airport to Palace Square he headed a procession welcomed by tremendous applause, waving of flags and banners, showers of confetti, and displays of fireworks.

In his speech from the balcony of the palace he told of the days and nights of prolonged negotiations to obtain the independence for which the people of many countries had been obliged to fight and even to shed blood. Steps had already been taken, he said, toward Malta's membership in the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Expressing a hope that all would work with the government to lead Malta to her salvation he added: "This is not a personal victory, not a triumph for the Nationalist Party, but a victory for Malta."

The legislative assembly, which had been adjourned since 26th April, was reopened, most unusually, on 19th August, in the middle of a Maltese summer, and it passed the budget.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, p. 40; H. Ganado, *op.cit.*, vol.4, pp. 425-427. The cable was actually from Ganado, although Mable took a similar position; less so Pellegrini.

¹⁰¹ E. Dobie, *Malta's Road to Independence* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 256-257.

Twilight to Dawn

HOPES AND FEARS ON THE APPOINTED DAY

Borg Olivier once said that he had aspired to the eighth of September as Malta's Independence Day, but that had not been possible in the circumstances.¹ The *Otto Settembre* - as it was known to successive generations of Maltese - commemorated perhaps the two most important victories ever won by Malta over her adversaries: the first in the sixteenth century, against the Ottoman Empire of Suleiman the Magnificent and an expansionist Muslim hegemony; the second, in the twentieth, against the Axis Powers led by Hitler and Mussolini. These victories were epitomised in and symbolised by the popular Maltese Catholic feast of Our Lady of Victories, known as '*il-Vitorja*', traditionally celebrated on that day.

¹ "Fil-fatt li gara kien li n-negozjati mal-Gvern Ingliż kienu iebsa u twal u meta bdejna nersqu għall-ftehim ta' l-aħħar jiena kont qed nimmira possibbilment għat-8 ta' Settembru bħala d-data tad-dikjarazzjoni ta' l-Indipendenza, żda minhabba ostakoli u diffikultajiet ta' l-aħħar dan ma setax isir..." Anonymous interview with Dr Borg Olivier, 'Għaxar snin Nazzjon Indipendenti', supplement, *In-Nazzjon*, 21 Sept. 1974.

When Malta was a British colonial possession, she had no national feast of her own as a separate nation. Her 'national' festivities were officially the British and Imperial commemorations - St George's Day, Empire Day, the Queen's Birthday. There were religious and folk related feast-days, such as *L-Imnarja* on 29th June marking the feast of St Peter and St Paul, but no national day as such. Probably unknown to Borg Olivier, it was his erstwhile predecessor and founding-father of the Maltese nationalist movement Dr Fortunato Mizzi (d. 1905) who in 1885 in a show of patriotism had first declared the *Otto Settembre* as Malta's national day. To mark that departure at a time when Mizzi and his *Partito Nazionale* were rapidly consolidating their hold over national sentiment through growing popularity in the struggle for Representative Government, a public meeting was organized in Valletta's Palace Square. And it was during that agitated political commemoration on the *Otto Settembre*, 1885, that one of Mizzi's more learned and less inhibited supporters uttered the so-called 'Garibaldian' cry, which landed him into trouble: "*Viva Malta! Malta e' dei Maltesi non degli Inglesi! Fuori lo straniero!*" (Long live Malta! Malta belongs to the Maltese not to the English! Out with the foreigner!)² Among Maltese migrant communities, who had left their homeland before Independence, the *Otto Settembre* had continued to express their nationality and identity more than any other day, just as it had long done in the Maltese Islands themselves.³ Like all those of his generation Borg Olivier had grown up with the *Otto Settembre* - the first church erected in his hometown Valletta was *il-knisja tal-Vitorja*; so one can understand his preference for capitalizing on such a day, which already possessed a national currency and charisma, uniting it with a third most important victory for a long-dominated country: independence from foreign rule.

² He was Dr Zaccaria Roncali. A Maltese loyalist who was present reported the incident to the Governor for action possibly on grounds of sedition. See H. Frendo, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony; The Maltese Experience*, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

³ See H. Frendo, 'Religion and Ethnic Identity in the Maltese Australian Community', A. Ata (Ed.), *Religion and Ethnic Identity; An Australian Study* (Spectrum, Melbourne, 1988), p. 179.

However, according to an official in the Commonwealth Relations Office, early in 1964 Borg Olivier had suggested St George's Day as a possible date for Malta's independence. In a letter to Sir Timothy Bligh at 10, Downing Street, Freda Smith on behalf of Duncan Sandys asked if Douglas-Home's approval could be sought for a proposal that the Duke of Edinburgh, in view of his past connections with Malta, should represent the Queen at the Malta Independence Day celebrations. A firm date for these had not yet been finally fixed, she wrote:

Dr. Olivier would like it to be on St George's Day, 23rd April, but we know the Duke has an engagement in England that day.

Moreover, she added, some constitutional points still had to be resolved and it was just possible that Independence might have to be postponed for a short period. All present indications however were that Malta would remain in the Commonwealth with a monarchical constitution. As one of the newly-converted docks in the former Admiralty dockyard was due to be completed in April, the Secretary of State considered that it would be appropriate for The Queen's personal representative at the Independence Day celebrations to perform the opening ceremony, preferably on the eve of Independence.⁴

If, as some have held, Borg Olivier was superstitious and disliked the month of May,⁵ then the last week of April would have been near enough to the mark. St George represented an age of chivalry from the time of the Crusades; he had become England's patron saint when she was still a Roman Catholic country and was passionately revered in more than one parish in the Maltese Islands. It is unclear why Ms Smith should have deemed it relevant to mention an obviously impossible date in an official letter although she must have done so approvingly, if not condescendingly. However much any such suggestion by Borg Olivier may have warmed her heart and

⁴ Smith/Bligh, 29 Jan. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

⁵ See E. Mizzi, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

tickled her fancy, it seems bizarre in an End of Empire context, unless it was simply and half-seriously meant as a compliment while making conversation on a social occasion.

Why did 21st September become “the appointed day” for Malta’s Independence? It seems certain that the 21st September was prompted and probably decided and ‘appointed’ by the Duke of Edinburgh’s diary, no more no less. In fact, Freda Smith’s letter is more important for its ready presumption that the Duke’s engagements mattered more than any preferred date, even - or rather, more so - if that date were England’s own national day.

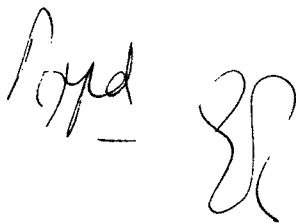
It was only towards the end of July 1964 that a date could finally be fixed for Malta’s Independence. In the course of two years, various other dates had been suggested tentatively, the most definite of which had been 31st May. By April it had become obvious that it was going to be practically impossible for Malta to make it by 31st May, when a referendum on the proposed Independence Constitution still had to be held in early May. The required legislation would have had to be passed before the British Parliament rose on 15th May.⁶ In early May during a meeting in the Cabinet Office it was officially and irrevocably decided that the 31st May was definitely out and that, moreover, there was a possibility that independence might have to be “delayed for some considerable time”.⁷

At his audience on 4th February 1964 Sir Alec discussed with Queen Elizabeth the possibility of Prince Philip representing her at the Malta Independence Celebrations, but no announcement had to be made until the Maltese position had clarified itself.⁸ As early as February, too, His Royal Highness made it known that

⁶ Huijsman/Bonham-Carter, 6 Apr. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

⁷ Minutes of a Meeting held in Sir Burke Trend’s Room, Room 103, Cabinet Office, Whitehall, S.W.1, on Tuesday, 5th May 1964, at 3 p.m., conf., 926/1920/48583.

⁸ Bligh/Smith, 7 Feb. 1964, conf., 926/1920/48583.



Mr. Secretary Sandys, with his humble duty to The Queen, begs to submit for Your Majesty's approval that the attached copies of the Malta Independence Act, 1964 and the Malta (Independence) Order in Council, 1964 be presented to the Government of Malta by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, on the occasion of His Royal Highness's address at the Independence Ceremony.



2nd September, 1964.

The Queen's approval in her own hand of the British Government's proposals that she be designated as Malta's monarch (right) and that on her behalf the Duke of Edinburgh should present the Independence constitutional instruments to the Government of Malta.

Appd
SG



AUBERGE D'ARAGON,
MALTA.

Dr. Giorgio Borg Olivier, Prime Minister of Malta, presents his humble duty to The Queen and has the honour to submit for Your Majesty's approval the proposal of Your Majesty's Ministers in Malta that Your Majesty may be graciously pleased to take the following title:-

"Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of
God, Queen of Malta and of Her other
Realms and Territories, Head of the
Commonwealth."

If Your Majesty is graciously pleased to accede to this request, Dr. Borg Olivier has the honour to submit further that Your Majesty may cause a Proclamation to be issued in the terms of the attached draft.

7th October, 1964.

Giorgio Olivier

at this late stage it would only be possible for him to go on this, or for that matter any other date in the summer, at the expense of a number of engagements he has already agreed upon in this country, with the consequent disruption of many peoples' plans.⁹

On 30th July, Buckingham Palace officially informed Downing Street that the Queen wished to be represented at the Malta Independence celebrations and that the Duke of Edinburgh should be her representative. This had already been discussed informally with His Royal Highness's staff, and he had said that "he will be available on the date in question."¹⁰

It is certain that "the date in question" was 21st September. Sandys had been informed a few days earlier by Rear-Admiral Christopher Bonham-Carter that the Duke would be prepared to be in Malta for the Independence celebrations "on 21st September". He would arrive on Saturday, 19th September, from Athens "in good time for dinner", probably about 6 p.m., and he would like to spend the day on Sunday quietly. He assumed that the flag-raising ceremony would be at midnight on Sunday night, presumably after the usual state banquet. The Duke hoped to leave after lunch on Monday but, if absolutely unavoidable, he would be prepared to stay another night, although the Maltese were not to be told that.

On the same day, 25th July, Sandys informed Borg Olivier, who was still in London, of the cleared dates.¹¹ In the early afternoon he met with Borg Olivier and Felice in the Commonwealth Relations Office for this purpose. The Duke would arrive on Saturday 19th and leave after lunch on Monday 21st which would mean, Sandys explained, that the handing over of the Independence documents and the State opening of Parliament would have to take place on the Monday

⁹ Bonham-Carter/Huijsman, 28 Feb. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

¹⁰ Adams/Huijsman, 30 July 1964, conf., 926/1920/48583.

¹¹ Min., Sandys/Poynton, 25 July 1964, 926/1920/48583.

morning. Borg Olivier said he was sure this would be acceptable. Dr Felice was slightly anxious about the proclamation for the summoning of Parliament, as there would be little time for this to be issued. However, he was sure that suitable arrangements could be made. Felice also agreed to look into the question of when the Duke should arrive in Malta on Saturday. He thought 6 p.m. would be suitable, "provided there was sufficient daylight at that time".¹²

The Duke of Edinburgh planned to go to Athens to attend the wedding of the King of Greece and expected to leave Britain about the 16th September. The Duke's staff at Balmoral Castle expected that on this occasion they would be more than usually pressed for time.¹³ What this meant was that His Royal Highness would be stopping over in Malta for the weekend on his return leg from Athens to London, where he would then be attending to other functions.

On his triumphal return to Malta on 26th July, Borg Oliver announced that he had proposed the 21st September as Independence Day.¹⁴ He had known for a day, from Sandys, that the Duke had confirmed he would be present on the 21st.

Joint announcements were intended, however, both for the Duke's visit and for the independence date itself.¹⁵ Sandys and Borg Olivier had agreed that the date of independence should be announced after the House of Lords debate.¹⁶ By a pertinent

¹² 'The Queen's Representative at the Independence Celebrations', extract from Note of a Meeting between the Sec. of State and Dr Borg Olivier at 12.30 p.m. on Saturday 25th July, 1964 in the C.R.O., conf., 926/1920/48583.

¹³ Charteris/Huijsman, 16 Aug. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

¹⁴ Tel., Wakefield/Kisch, 5 Aug. 1964, conf., 926/1920/48583.

¹⁵ Sandys/Wakefield, 30 July 1964, 926/1920/48583.

¹⁶ Min., Sandys/Poynton, 25 July 1964, 926/1920/48583.

PRIORITY MARKINGS Emergency Immediate Priority Reply urgently required Nil		File No. <u>FD 86/436/656</u> DRAFT *TELEGRAM *SAVINGRAM * Delete whichever is inapplicable. If necessary, "Priority" may be inserted before "Savingram."		SECURITY, ETC., MARKINGS Top Secret Secret Confidential Restricted Unclassified Personal Guard	
Addressed Mr. <u>Kinoh</u> Mr. <u>.....</u> Mr. <u>.....</u> Mr. <u>.....</u> Sir <u>.....</u> Permt. U.S. of S. Parly. U.S. of S. Minister of State Secretary of State		No. <u>458</u>		Repeated (Insert appropriate priority marking)	
ENCLOSURES (Savingrams only)		U.K. COMMISSIONER, MALTA. <u>Malcolm Vallon Ha Malta</u>		No.	
MEDIUM On card On disc On paper (Delete whichever is inapplicable)		SAVINGRAMS ONLY Year reference		FOR USE IN TELEGRAPH BRANCH Despatched <u>1964</u> On <u>20/8/1964</u> At <u>17.30</u> Hrs.	
<u>Confidential</u> (Insert appropriate security, etc., marking)					
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS		File References Our telegram No. 402. Independence announcement. Our announcement will be: "Mr. Duncan Sandys (Secretary of State for the Colonies) has informed Dr. Borg Olivier (Prime Minister of Malta) that the British Government accept his proposal that Malta should become independent on 21st September, 1964." Buckingham Palace announcement will be as in my telegram under reference. As soon as we receive concurrence as requested in last paragraph of Secretary of State's letter of 19th August to Olivier we will arrange for simultaneous announcement in U.K. and Malta. Please say if any particular time of issue is preferred by Maltese.			
DISTRIBUTION AND FURTHER ACTION		MALTA DISTRIBUTION FO - Mr. Walker CRO - Mr. Dutton 12-9-64			
PRINT NO PRINTING (Delete whichever is inapplicable)		6-2-4-8d.			

A cable confirming that Malta should become independent on 21st September 1964, sent by a coincidence on 20th August 1964 - two years to the day since Borg Olivier had made his demand for Independence.

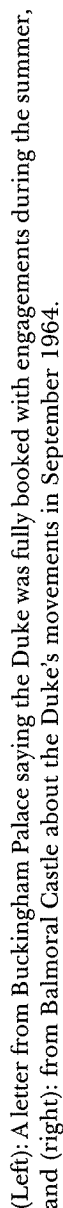
coincidence it was exactly two years to the day after Borg Olivier had demanded independence for Malta, on 20th August 1964, that the text of the prepared British announcement was communicated to Malta. It said that Sandys had informed Borg Olivier that the British Government "accept his proposal that Malta should become independent on 21st September 1964." Buckingham Palace would announce the Duke's visit themselves.¹⁷

When asked by this writer in 1989 why the 8th September had not been adhered to, the chairman of the organizing committee of the Malta Independence Celebrations and one of Borg Olivier's senior Ministers, Dr Carmelo Caruana, said that Independence was such an important, unique event in Maltese history that it deserved a date to itself, hence the 21st September.¹⁸ Actually the 8th September was never specifically indicated in official correspondence prior to Independence, whatever Dr Borg Olivier's may have had in mind. Even so, there were so many variables that it was practically impossible to just pick and choose a preordained date, expecting others, including representatives of the Queen and the British Government, to submit and conform to your convenience. A date mutually convenient to those concerned, towards the end of the summer when the Duke's diary was rather less packed, had to be negotiated. The royal wedding in Athens clearly lent itself to a royal visit to Malta on the way back.

Thus it was that the 21st September, which until now had seemed like just another date on paper, began to assume a significance and a dynamism of its own. It was, Borg Olivier later recalled, the date "closest to" the 8th September "on which agreement could be reached." That was also, he added, in regard to the organisation of

¹⁷ Tel., Sandys/Wakefield, 20 Aug. 1964, conf., 926/1920/48583.

¹⁸ H. Frendo, 'L-Indipendenza: Storja ta' Kuragg', *Il-Poplu*, n. 14, Sept. 1989, pp. 31-32; *Malta's Quest for Independence; Reflections on the Course of Maltese History*, op.cit., p. 252. The other members of Caruana's organizing committee were Minister J. Spiteri, Major F. E. Amato-Gauci, Major V. Castillo, E. Firman, J. Pollacco, Dr V. Ragonesi, M. J. V. Bonello (Secretary) and M. Padovani (Assistant Secretary).



the celebrations of "that historic occasion, for which Prince Philip and Mr Duncan Sandys had to attend", together with other personalities.¹⁹

In the meantime, there were many preparations to be seen to in London as well as in Malta, mostly necessary formalities of procedure or protocol concerned with the transfer of power, Malta's membership of international organizations, guest lists and invitations, lunches and dinners, a ball and a banquet, speeches, encounters and festivities. The programme for the Independence celebrations was drafted and redrafted at least six times, with the Maltese side making demands which were sometimes more problematic than they seemed at first sight.

One such was the attendance of Prince Philip, as expected by Dr Borg Olivier, at a Holy Mass of Thanksgiving - a Roman Catholic Mass, naturally. Until clearance for this could be obtained, consultations had taken place between the Colonial Office, Balmoral Castle, the Home Office, Downing Street and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There had been at least one precedent, the Home Office found out, for the representation of The Queen at a Mass in Britain. However, "the presence of Prince Philip would undoubtedly be breaking new ground; there might be criticism from some people in this country..." On the other hand, for him to decline attending had to be weighed "against the disadvantage of upsetting public opinion in Malta." After 10, Downing Street had registered in a memo the conclusions of a discussion held with Dr Ramsey, the Secretary of State's private office and Sir Martin Charteris at Balmoral Castle were informed that "in the circumstances" the Governor of Malta would be informed that the Secretary of State saw no objection. Dorman was then cabled accordingly.²⁰ It is worth revealing that

¹⁹ 'Għaxar snin Nazzjon Indipendenti' interview, *op.cit.*

²⁰ Min., Martin/Jenkins, 7 Sept. 1964, 926/1920/48583.



M. Kisch

Sir Hilton Poynton²⁷ 7

Admiral Bonham-Carter has informed me this morning that the Duke of Edinburgh will be prepared to represent The Queen at the Malta Independence Celebrations on 21st September.

He will arrive on Saturday, 19th September, from Athens in good time for dinner, probably about 6 p.m. He would like to spend the day on Sunday quietly.

He assumes that the flag-raising ceremony will be at midnight on Sunday night, (I imagine this will be preceded by the usual state banquet).

The Duke would, if possible, like to leave Malta after lunch on Monday, which would mean that the formal handing over of the independence documents and the State opening of Parliament would have to take place on Monday morning. (If absolutely unavoidable he would be prepared to stay another night, leaving early Tuesday morning. But the Maltese authorities should not at this stage be told of this possibility).

I have informed Dr. Borg Olivier of the above (except for the last point).

We have agreed that the date of independence should be announced later this week, after the House of Lords Debate, probably on Thursday.

I now leave it to you to make all necessary administrative arrangements.

B.S.

25th July, 1964.

Copy to Lord Lansdowne.

The final confirmations.

after so much critical talk about religious tolerance and disability, Malta on her Independence should have broken a spell against 'royal' attendance at a Catholic Mass, which had held firm since Henry VIII's Reformation. What actually happened was that in the morning of Monday 21st September only Low Mass was said at the Independence Arena; by the time the Pontifical High Mass was said by the Archbishop at St John's on the morning of Wednesday 23rd, the Duke had left.

The Borg Olivier administration were busy making way for Malta's membership of international organizations. Britain acted as godmother in Malta's membership of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations after circulating the Maltese government's request to all Commonwealth capitals for information or advice. There was no objection in Malta to Commonwealth membership, other than that the MLP did not wish to have this done before Independence, whereas there was no objection at all to Malta's membership of the UN or the Council of Europe. Such undertakings normally required the approval of the respective colonial legislature through an appropriate resolution.²¹ The recommended wording for the Commonwealth membership resolution was conveyed by Christopher Eastwood to Victor Ragonesi at the Savoy Hotel in July,²² after which a preliminary circular went out to Ottawa, Canberra, Wellington, Delhi, Karachi, Colombo, Accra, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos, Nicosia, Freetown, Dar es Salaam, Kingston, Port of Spain, Kampala, Nairobi and Zomba.²³ In August the Malta Legislative Assembly passed the appropriate resolution, as advised. Borg Olivier informed Sandys accordingly so that the formal concurrence of the other Commonwealth Governments to Malta becoming a member of the Commonwealth on Independence be now sought.²⁴

²¹ Min., Poynton/Garner, 17 June 1964, conf., 926/1879.

²² Eastwood/Ragonesi, 24 July 1964, 926/1879.

²³ 'Malta - Membership of the Commonwealth', 2-MED 706/131/1, enc. 926/1879.

²⁴ Borg Olivier/Sandys, 22 Aug. 1964, 926/1879.

Early in September Borg Olivier asked Sandys if the UK together with such other country as they might consider appropriate would undertake to sponsor Malta's formal application for membership of the UN. Malta wanted to send her application to the UN Secretary-General as soon after Independence as possible.²⁵

Sponsorship in the UN Security Council was needed for Malawi and Zambia at the same time as Malta. Strictly speaking only one sponsor was necessary, and moreover there was no other Commonwealth member of the Security Council, apart from Britain. The Chairman for October 1964 was Sir Patrick Dean who could sponsor all three applications. The other African members of the Security Council would spontaneously sponsor Malawi and Zambia, but there was "no obvious spontaneous sponsor for Malta". If a second sponsor was necessary, Morocco or Brazil looked like appropriate choices, and soundings in New York were recommended in this sense. At the same time, all Commonwealth countries would be asked to support Malta's application in the UN General Assembly.²⁶

Advice was also at hand on Malta's arrangements for accredited representation in Washington and New York. For example, she would be expected to join the Economic Commission for Europe, while membership of UN specialized agencies would be most easily arranged as soon as Malta would have joined the UN. In the case of Gambia, the question of the cost of maintaining a mission at the UN had arisen. This depended on Malta of course, but many small countries accredited their Ambassador in Washington to the UN as well. The cost depended very much on that sort of consideration.²⁷ Later in 1964 Malta adopted such a practice when Borg Olivier nominated a distinguished and very cosmopolitan gentleman of Maltese descent to represent the new state both in Washington and

²⁵ Borg Olivier/Sandys, 4 Sept. 1964, 926/1880.

²⁶ Axworthy/Barder, 16 Sept. 1964, 926/1880.

²⁷ Min., Axworthy/Jenkins, 23 July 1964, 926/1880.

New York.²⁸ Borg Olivier addressed the General Assembly later in 1964.

Malta also joined the Council of Europe, citing her three-dimensional credentials as a Commonwealth member and a European country in the Mediterranean region. Borg Olivier's Cabinet decided to apply in August 1964 and Malta's admission was then jointly sponsored by Britain and Italy. This application was unanimously upheld by the Committee of Ministers in December 1964, endorsed by the Consultative Assembly in January 1965 and implemented in April 1965, thus making Malta the eighteenth member state of the Council of Europe (which by 1999 had 41 member states).²⁹

Borg Olivier would deliver one of the most insightful and far-sighted speeches of his career in addressing the Council on 4th May 1965, when he spoke of Malta's joining as a "home coming" after a long absence, warned against new forms of nationalism which would keep Europe divided, and held out the aspiration for East-West reconciliation in a more closely united European continent, from which no European state would feel excluded by a privileged nucleus.³⁰

Another challenge facing Malta as a new small state was the setting up of a Ministry for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, as it was

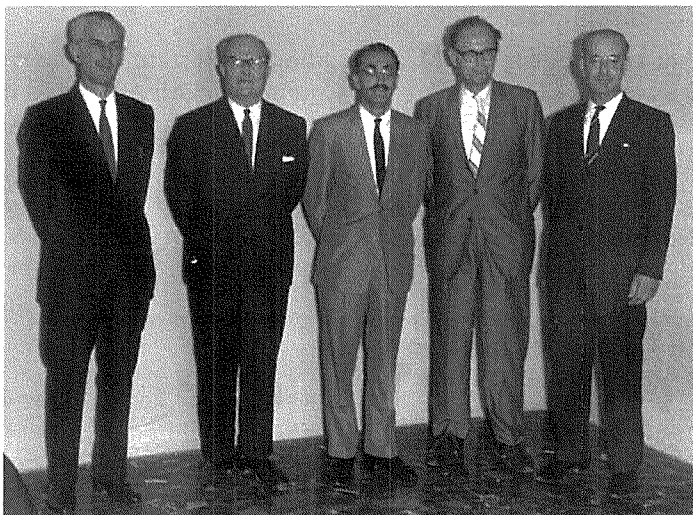
²⁸ Dr Arvid Pardo (d.1999) became well-known in successfully championing Malta's initiative through the UN for protection from exploitation of the world's sea-bed and ocean-floor - as "a common heritage of mankind".

²⁹ See 'Malta's Admission to the Council of Europe' in H. Frendo, *Maltese Political Development, 1798-1964; A Documentary History*, *op.cit.*, p. 915.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, esp. 'Dr Borg Olivier's Speech to the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly in Strasbourg on 4 May, 1965', pp. 918-921; but see also G. Saliba (Ed.), *A Council for All Seasons; 50th Anniversary of the Council of Europe* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Valletta, 1999), pp. 32-35; H. Frendo, 'The Council of Europe's Role in Malta's Democratization Process', *ibid.*, pp. 79-86; and *passim*.



Malta's first High Commissioner to the UK, Mr John Axisa, presents his credentials to the British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home at 10, Downing Street, in 1964. As Malta was a monarchy he could not present his credentials to "our Queen". Axisa was the Commissioner General for Malta in London from 1961 to 1964. Below: Mr F. E. Amato Gauci (centre), who was asked to set up a Foreign Service, is seen here with four of Malta's first ambassadors: A. Pullicino, J. F. Axisa, A. Pardo and P. Pullicino.



2 called. The first Maltese overseas representatives had to be earmarked for accreditation, while the first fully-fledged Ambassadors would soon take up residence in a newly-sovereign country. Borg Olivier kept this Ministry under his wing, thus adding Minister of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to his title of Prime Minister.

The first serious decision facing Malta's foreign affairs ministry concerned Malta's would-be relations and dealings with China. Which China? Following the defeat of the Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists at the hands of Mao Tse-tung's Communists in 1949, the latter had moved their seat to the island of Formosa, better known today as Taiwan, hoping initially to regain the mainland. To the UN in 1964, China still meant Taiwan, which was a member of the Security Council. Chiang Kai-shek had supported the Americans against the Japanese during the Second World War, and the Americans, who opposed Communism, now supported him in turn. The British, however, had broken a lance in favour of the Communists, which were assuming much greater clout and represented a formidable market.

As Malta's independence approached, a decision had to be taken as to which China to prefer. The Americans tried to influence Malta in favour of the Chinese Nationalists, the British in favour of the Chinese Communists. Suddenly, Malta was faced by an international relations problem, when it had not even become independent yet. These Chinese did not recognize one another, and to invite one or even both could be regarded as siding against the other. In the end, Malta disregarded British nudging and preferred Taiwan, which was pro-American, anti-Communist and seemed willing to help out. Communist China would not join the UN until 1971 when Richard Nixon was the U.S. President - Nixon actually visited this China in 1972.

The 'which China' question posits itself as a paradigm in the sudden options and approaches facing - and open to - a nascent small state in international diplomacy, and in the cultivation or alienation of relations with other more powerful states. The Cold War was alive and well in the 1960s; power brokers had different agendas. The

'which China' question bore to some extent on a not unheard of disagreement between two friendly powers, the U.S.A. and the U.K., and on how a new small state, in this case Borg Olivier's Malta, might navigate in such waters: asserting sovereignty while treading softly. Foreign affairs had always been reserved matters for the Crown in Malta, even under Malta's internal self-government constitutions of 1921, 1947 and 1961. It was only in the early 1960s that Malta could start to be somewhat exposed to bilateral and multilateral relations, but still grudgingly and under watchful British eyes.

Until the early 1960s, the main bone of contention and party divide in Maltese colonial politics had been whether as an orientation Malta should aspire to protect, cultivate and promote her long-standing Latin Mediterranean roots, or to benefit from adapting herself to day-to-day life as a strategic naval outpost of the British Empire. That was an invidious tussle between identity and right, on one hand, survival and necessity, on the other. A nationalist would have also argued for *survivance* in a Quebecois sense, but for ordinary working people jobs and opportunities as these presented themselves would have been hardly less important. In the colonial cocoon there was plenty of time in which to argue about such matters; in an independent state life was faster and necessarily more pragmatic. Problems had to be faced head-on and decisions taken by the newly-independent people themselves in what they perceived to be their own best interests.

In its own way, the 'which China' question pointed to an emerging situation that was in fact quite new for a place like Malta, although Borg Olivier liked assuming in his speeches that Malta had been a sovereign state before it had become a colony. He told Strasbourg in 1965 for instance that "with the recent attainment of Independence, Malta regained her sovereignty of old; and one of the most ancient nations of Europe returned to take its place among the free countries of this Continent." But this smacked of a familiar old-time typology of nationalist myth: it was not quite true, because even under the Order since the 16th century Malta was a fiefdom in international law, and such emissaries as the Order had accredited or were accredited to it came and went in relation to the Order as

an institution not to Malta as a nation-state. Before that, feudalism reigned supreme, haltingly and inter-changeably; nor as a rule were the dominant feudal masters themselves Maltese. Unwittingly, Borg Olivier did himself and Malta a disservice by suggesting that Maltese sovereignty had been interrupted at some point, and Malta was now reclaiming it. Malta had indeed enjoyed internal autonomy: a dominant class at Notabile and two or three other communes may have done much as they pleased in various respects at certain times, but she had usually belonged to someone or other, and she certainly had not exercised sovereignty as an independent state in any modern sense at all - possibly and arguably with the exception of a few weeks or months in 1798. Decisions on foreign policy, such as which state to recognize or accredit to Malta or not, were to all intents and purposes being taken by Borg Olivier and his ministry in 1964 for the first time in Malta's national history, hence the uniqueness of 1964.

It was precisely because other powers knew this that they were now lobbying the soon-to-be independent Maltese government with regard to choosing one China rather than the other. The American Consul General, Mr Harrison Lewis, tried to see Borg Olivier about this already in April 1964. His object was, as he explained, "to exclude communist Chinese recognition in countries newly achieving Independence". The UK Commissioner kept him at bay however. Sir Edward Wakefield referred the American Consul General to section 83 of the Malta Constitution of 1961. Her Majesty's Government, he told him, controlled Malta's external affairs apart from such matters as were referred to in that section. The Malta Government, he further told Harrison Lewis, could not, without the prior approval of Her Majesty's Government, discuss with a representative of the United States Government "such matters as post-Independence recognition of either or both of the two Chinese governments".

Lewis had to go back to the State Department to inform them of the constitutional position in Malta and to suggest to them "that they should obtain the assent" of Her Majesty's Government, through the Foreign Office, to the adoption to one of two courses. These were,

according to Wakefield, either that, "with our approval", the U.S. Consul General should take the matter up with the Malta Government; or that the UK Commissioner (himself) should approach the Malta Government in the manner desired.³¹

The Foreign Office was both more open and more practical. They saw no objection to the U.S. Consul General speaking "direct" to the Maltese about this matter: "we must accept that sooner or later they will do so." The question was not whether they allowed the Americans to speak to the Maltese or not, but "what steps we should take to speak to the Maltese ourselves". While realising that neither the C.O. nor the C.R.O. would wish "to lay down the law to the Malta Government", there was no obvious reason why they should not make sure that the Malta Government realised that, "as a newly independent state, they will become involved in the China controversy" and that they might shortly expect to receive feelers from both the Chinese Nationalist authorities in Formosa and the Chinese Government in Peking:

So far as we are concerned, our interest lies in their having nothing to do with the Nationalists, but at the same time in their having no illusions about the Communists. We could therefore reasonably point out that so far as we can judge, neither Formosa nor China has anything to contribute to Malta's problems, which are basically economic, and that the Maltese should therefore beware of their blandishments.

It was entirely for the Malta Government to decide their own foreign policy, but they should realise that there was absolutely no prospect of the Nationalists recovering the mainland, and that therefore, "if the Malta Government enter into diplomatic relations with them, the Maltese may find themselves eventually in the position of King Canute."³²

³¹ Wakefield/Kisch, 29 Apr. 1964, 926/2077.

³² Flack/Kisch, 20 May 1964, conf., 926/2077.

This King Canute metaphor was meant to imply that greater power lay increasingly with the Communists rather than with the Nationalists of China, so the Maltese had better watch it because they could be swept aside by the waves. A pagan Danish king who had converted to Christianity as King of England before the Norman conquest, in a legendary tale Cnut had demonstrated to time-serving flatterers the limitations of his powers by failing to make the waves recede.³³

Having thus loaded the dice, the Foreign Office then sounded a note of caution. They would, on the other hand,

fully sympathise with any disinclination on the part of the Malta Government to have a Communist mission in Malta, and if they eventually decide to recognise the Peking regime, they would be entitled to make it quite clear that they saw no need to exchange representatives.³⁴

In instructions to the British ambassador in Athens, the Foreign Office, after consultation with the Colonial Office, held that they would much prefer it if the Nationalist Chinese ambassador there, Dr Wen, should “not, repeat not, visit Malta before the Colony becomes independent”, for the purpose about which he was “so very frank”. If however an application were made before that time, it would have to be referred in the normal way to the Maltese Government of course, with whom the final decision lay:

³³ The story was told by a 12th century chronicler, the archdeacon Henry of Huntingdon in his *Historia Anglorum*. In the words of Barton's seven stanza poem: Louder the stormy blast swept by,/In scorn of his idle word;/The briny deep its waves tossed high,/By his mandate undeterred,/As threatening, in their angry play,/To sweep both king and court away! See Cardinal F. A. Gasquet's *Early English History to the Norman Conquest* (London, 1926), p. 120. On King Canute see the Maltese colonial school textbook, by D.Fallon, ch. VI, 'The Danish Kings', *Outlines of English History* (G. Muscat, Valletta), pp. 16-17.

³⁴ Flack/Kisch, 20 May, 1964, conf., 926/2077.

You should therefore avoid encouraging Dr Wen in any way and, should he approach you informally again, point out that in view of the absence of relations between the Chinese Nationalists and ourselves, it might be better if he made his approach to the Malta Government after independence, the provisional date of which is September 21.

At the same time, Wakefield was asked to "pass on our views to the Malta Government" when the opportunity arose. Reference was also made to additional material about this subject enclosed with another letter sent to the UK Commission.³⁵

When on 11th August *The Times* of London carried a report saying that Dr Borg Olivier had invited representatives of about 60 governments, including those who were members of the Security Council, to send representatives to Independence celebrations from 16th to 23rd September, the Chinese ambassador approached the UK Mission in New York. His Excellency Liu Chieh on 17th August asked for further information from his British counter-part, Mr Jackling, and hoped that China as a Security Council member would be included in the invitations. Although Malta's Independence date had been well and truly set if not sealed by 17th August, Jackling told Chieh that the Malta Independence Bill had received the Royal Assent but had not yet been brought into effect and "no official date had been fixed for Malta's independence". Jackling kindly promised to pass on Chieh's enquiry to London and that he would tell him if he heard anything definite about the Malta invitations.³⁶ If this was a Chinese way of testing the British on their stand with Malta on this question, the latter had failed the test miserably. From now on, the Nationalists of China would deal with the Nationalists of Malta. Britain was being of no help to them whatsoever.

³⁵ F.O. tel., 30 July 1964, to Athens, conf.; Kisch/Watt, 28 May 1964, 926/2077. The F.O. 'communiqué' was distributed to the Far Eastern Dept., the Central Dept., and the Passport Control Dept.

³⁶ A copy of the UK Mission tel., 18 Aug. 1964, to the F.O., was sent by the C.O. to Malta, 20 Aug. 1964, 926/2077.



Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-shek, President of the Republic of China, with a Maltese delegation led by Minister Caruana after Independence. Major Castillo, Mr Wirth and Dr Ragonesi formed part of the delegation.

The Maltese Government thought of inviting the member states in the UN Security Council, of which China was one, of NATO, and of the Commonwealth. In addition, all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean littoral - North, South East and West - were asked. Invitations were also issued to other states such as Switzerland, the Holy See, the Sovereign Order of Malta, and the chairpersons or chief executives of several international organizations including I.C.E.M., W.H.O., the I.L.O., U.N.E.S.C.O., F.A.O., and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The UK were entitled to six delegates and up to another six in parliamentary delegations from both the Houses of Parliament, with a personal invitation addressed to Mr Harold Wilson. Six past governors of Malta were pleased to be invited: Dobbie, Douglas, Schreiber, Creasy, Laycock and Grantham. Mr B. Lindsay Fynn, who chaired the Friends of Malta G.C., was on the list, as was a very special guest,

Dr Constantine Colombus, the famous Malta-born jurist, a Greek-Maltese who had been legal counsel to and a personal friend of the former Nationalist leader and twice prime minister Sir Ugo Mifsud (d. 1942). Other associations with whom Malta had worked or intended joining, such as the Inter-University Council, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the UN Economic Commission for Europe, were also asked. Each invitation was for two delegates or for one delegate and a spouse.³⁷

Governor Dorman informed Sir John Martin at the C.O. that Dr Borg Olivier had told him that the Maltese would like in particular to invite Libya and Israel.³⁸

By 10th August, some sixty invitees had expressed their intention to attend, as announced in a press conference by Caruana at the Auberge d'Aragon, and reported in the press, including the *London Times*, on the following day.³⁹

The Maltese Government also wished to invite all member governments of NATO to send units of their fleets to participate in the Independence celebrations on 21st September. If this was impracticable, they wished at least to ask the five or six nations participating in the NATO Mediterranean Naval Command to send ships. The C-in-C at HAFMED saw no objection to this, although one of those states, France, had withdrawn her ships. The capitals of NATO member states - Ankara, Athens, Brussels, Lisbon, Oslo, Rome, Washington, Bonn, Copenhagen, Ottawa, Paris and the Hague - were informed by Britain about this. In their circular, the

³⁷ 'Invitations to Independence Celebrations', enc. 926/1921.

³⁸ Min., J. Martin, 30 July 1964, para. 5, 926/1921.

³⁹ For more details on this press conference, see R. Spiteri and A. Massa, *Twelid ta' Stat Indipendenti; Malta 1964* (Guga House, Valletta, 1989), p. 148, and all sections of the Maltese press.

Foreign Office asked their respective Ambassadors and High Commissioners to invite the states to which they were accredited, on behalf of the Maltese Government, to be represented by units of their Navy at the Independence celebrations. In the case of Italy, Greece and Turkey the respective ambassadors had to explain that the Maltese were "particularly anxious for them to be represented".

The F.O. added that they doubted whether NATO countries beyond those concerned in the Mediterranean area could organise naval representation, but they agreed that "it would be a welcome gesture if the four members, in addition to the United Kingdom, who participate in the Mediterranean area, could be represented".⁴⁰

So far, so good. That, however, was to reckon without any political problems. Of these Malta had her fair share, and more so than was generally realised.

Mintoff's Labour Party felt let down and left out. Even on Independence Day, they broke ranks. None of their more liberal, laicist or secularist points had found a place in the Independence Constitution: the restrictions relating to Catholic burial, Catholic education, marriage law, ecclesiastical preference or privilege, an electoral law less open to spiritual sanction, Western morality principles regulating whatever was decent or socially admissible. Not one of the *sitt punti* as such was in it. The great welcome given to Borg Olivier on his own return home after a long absence, on 26th July - "when the cheers drowned the noise from the engines of his own airplane" - was in return for the advent of Independence, accompanied by a reassuring defence and financial package; but it was also no doubt a vindication of the church-supported stand against Mintoff's so-called "six points", which were nowhere "in the bag" after all.

A general anti-discrimination clause had been introduced and the two offensive clauses discriminating in favour of the Catholic Church

⁴⁰ F.O./Ankara specimen, 26 Aug. 1964, conf., 926/1921.

in human rights provisions had been removed, but any specific infringement would have to be tested in time (as soon enough it was, when the Labour Party won its case against the prohibition to a patient of access to an MLP newspaper in St Luke's Hospital, a public general hospital).

Mintoff could have swallowed hard and given a conditional welcome to Independence, for which his party had fought so hard. He could have promised to liberalize, republicanize and change whatever he thought should be improved once he and his party would be returned to office by the Maltese electorate. Such a stance was taken subtly by the GWU, whose Union Press, like all other press stables except the MLP one, published a special supplement on 21st September to commemorate Malta's Independence - although they had their own reservations about it. However, as Attard Kingswell confided to this writer in 1989 and again in 1999, they never saw the Independence Constitution as "static and unchangeable"; nor were they in favour of a resort to violence to try and wrest a different Independence.⁴¹

Of the four Opposition parties, the MLP alone determined on a stridently antagonistic course of action during Independence week, when scores of distinguished representatives would be visiting Malta to greet her as a new member of the international community. This programme of activities was described as non-violent, but it was defiant, noisy and potentially troublesome. All party clubs were instructed to fly the flag at half-mast, accompanied by a black sash, as a sign of national mourning.⁴²

⁴¹ Time would prove the GWU right in this, because that Constitution was in fact changed. Malta was turned into a Republic in 1974 when the MLP were in office through a two-thirds majority in parliament. There was no referendum this time; in a free vote Borg Olivier himself and some other Nationalist MPs cast their votes against.

⁴² "Tellghu l-Bandiera Maltija Mezz'asta bil-Vistu Maghha", and see "Id-Direttivi Ta' L-Ezekuttiv Nazzjonali tal-Malta Labour Party", *Il-Helsien*, 17 Sept. 1964, p.1.

As a precaution, public meetings and demonstrations in any public place, other than official Independence celebrations, from the 16th to the 24th September inclusive, were banned by a proclamation published in the *Government Gazette* on 15th September. This initiative came from Police Commissioner de Gray who persuaded Ministers, "some of whom were at first reluctant", that such a ban was sensible. De Gray considered that although MLP extremists would wish to disobey the ban, the rank and file would be discouraged from supporting them. The GWU President, Danny Cremona, immediately attacked the ban, saying it violated human rights, aimed to stifle a large section of the population who disapproved of the Independence settlement, and displayed the Government's fears lest the "workers' movement" would make an impact on foreign delegates coming for the celebrations.⁴³

It is not clear to what extent Mintoff's popularity was surging at this turn of events. Although the official posture adopted by the party was typically defiant but wisely not a violent one, most people seemed reassured by the fact that Independence was accompanied by security and finance safety valves, without clauses deemed to be offensive or undesirable to the majority; and now that it had come, there was perhaps little point in opposing it by shouting in the street during the celebrations. Others however felt they had to make their voices heard and their resentment known at what in MLP circles was portrayed as a sell-out to the Catholic Church and the British Government.

If official estimates of the numbers of people attending public gatherings in the summer of 1964 can serve as a reading of the nation's pulse, it would seem that Mintoff's standing had suffered, or that Borg Olivier's had risen. The biggest of three MLP public meetings in July was a joint MLP-GWU demonstration on 12th July, which attracted a crowd of 2,500.⁴⁴ When however Sandys made his independence

⁴³ Wakefield/Sandys, 16 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/2076.

⁴⁴ Int. rep., 4 July-6 Aug. 1964, sec., para. 1, f.1, 926/1822/48655.

announcement in the Commons on 21st July, the “shock” was conveyed in the monthly British intelligence report as follows:

The Nationalist Party went wild with excitement and delight. They praised Borg Olivier extravagantly, and interpreted his success principally as a Nationalist Party triumph and as a blow to Mintoff. The Nationalist Party organised a triumphant homecoming for Borg Olivier. At the Airport he was given an enthusiastic reception by a large crowd of his own supporters; and in Valletta, where he spoke from the balcony of the Palace, he was welcomed by a crowd of some 12,000.⁴⁵

That was more than four times the size of the estimated crowd at the earlier MLP-GWU demonstration. Moreover, according to another estimate, an MLP public meeting (held at Birzebbugia, a Labour stronghold, on 26th July, the day when the Prime Minister’s aircraft was due to land on his return from London) was “only moderately attended”, and Mintoff spoke “with comparative moderation”.⁴⁶ On the whole, regard for Borg Olivier’s abilities, and support for his Government by the end of July were considered to be “greater than at any time since he took office in 1962”.⁴⁷ While GWU strike threats for pay rises especially by its Dockyard Section were partly settled or shelved, and a call to boycott the Eighth Malta Trade Fair went largely unheeded, the MLP announced its opposition programme for Independence week. As a build-up to this, Mintoff inveighed against the Independence Constitution and the Defence Treaty. He also attacked the British Labour Party, which in spite of the pleas of two Maltese Labour MPs - Agatha Barbara and Dr Philip Muscat despatched to London to lobby Labour MPs in their favour when the Malta Independence Bill was before the House of Commons - had still not really opposed the Bill.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 2, f. 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 4, f. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 5, f. 4.

Speaking in private after the announcement about the agreements reached, Mintoff said that the Defence Treaty made the British virtual rulers of Malta, giving them the power to move troops wherever they liked in the Islands. It also gave them the right to take any action, without even consulting the Government of Malta, whenever they felt that the security of the Islands was threatened. He criticised that part of the Defence Treaty which did not allow the Government of Malta to bring in foreign troops without the approval of the British Government. He said that his party should fight to get the Defence Treaty abrogated irrespective of the fact that the Financial Agreement was bound to it. On the Financial Agreement, Mintoff said that for what the British Government was taking in terms of defence, it was giving very little. He also criticised those clauses affecting the Dockyard and its development.

The MLP, Mintoff said, had been caught between two power blocks and was suffering the consequences. No one should expect him in the present circumstances to throw the people into a fight against the imperial forces, as this would only be a "waste of blood". There were strong forces ranged against them that would smash the Labour Movement. The only practicable solution was to watch carefully for any breach between the two power blocks, which could be exploited to the party's advantage. A frontal attack would be suicidal. They should use "harrassing tactics" which would not involve "grave loss of life".⁴⁸

Mintoff criticised the British Labour Party for their indifference to the MLP's cause in supporting the passing of the Independence Bill through Parliament, and he described their action as a betrayal of the principles they had bound themselves to defend. He said that he would "bring shame" to the faces of the British Labour Party delegates at the Socialist International conference, by denouncing them to other Socialist delegates.

⁴⁸ Annex, int. rep., 4 July-6 Aug. 1964, sec., para. 5-7, f.2, 926/1823/48655.

To boycott the Independence celebrations, an MLP Action Committee was formed and decided on a nine-point plan, as follows:

1. Corner meetings and conferences to start all over the island; directives to be given to district officials and representatives of the Women's Section, Labour League of Youth and Labour Brigade on action to be taken;
2. Posters and slogans to be displayed attacking the Defence treaty and the Independence Constitution;
3. M.L.P. Clubs to fly flags at half-mast on Independence Day;
4. Leaflets to be distributed to foreign visitors about the political situation and the events which led up to it;
5. M.L.P. officials to try and make direct personal contact with official foreign representatives to give them their views;
6. The M.L.P. to ask the Broadcasting Authority to allow it to give a talk on the Defence Treaty and the Independence Constitution, and to arrange a debate on these issues between the M.L.P. and Government teams;
7. On Saturday, 19th September, a mass meeting to be held, and on Sunday, 20th September, a demonstration to be held;
8. On Monday, 21st September, to hold a mock ceremony at the Freedom Press for the lowering of the British flag; and
9. The Parliamentary Group to walk out when the Duke of Edinburgh starts to deliver his speech at the Opening of Parliament. After the walk-out the Parliamentary Group

to make their way along Kingsway to the M.L.P. club in Kingsway. Mintoff to address the crowd from the balcony.

On the ninth point, the Action Committee was said to realise that the Parliamentary Group would have to make their way through a big crowd and were prepared to let events take their course. One Action Committee member had allegedly suggested that 700 "tough members" should be found to start trouble or defend Mintoff in the event of trouble. Others however were of the view that MLP members should stay away from the opening of Parliament.⁴⁹

There was concern particularly at the threatened walkout by the 16 Labour MPs during the Speech from the Throne. Such a walkout would not be the first one by the MLP - they had already done it in 1962 to Governor Grantham - but this time it was H.R.H. delivering the speech and the occasion was obviously far more important. Such a walkout during the Duke's speech risked denigrating and disrupting the State opening of Parliament ceremony at its very highlight. Even though this might be intended as a demonstration against the British and Maltese governments, it could not fail to be regarded as "extremely rude" to H.R.H. It was not thought that the C.O. could get anywhere by "a personal appeal to Mr Mintoff's better nature".⁵⁰ Less charitably, Sir Hilton Poynton saw no point in an appeal to Mr Mintoff's better nature "because he hasn't got one". They would impress upon Dorman and Wakefield the need to ensure that the Malta police controlled demonstrations and any disturbances effectively.⁵¹

Much more ominous was the report that "a secret plot to murder the Prime Minister, probably during the Independence celebrations" was afoot.

⁴⁹ Annex, int. rep., 7 Aug.-3 Sept. 1964, sec., para. 4-5, ff. 1-3, 926/1823/48655.

⁵⁰ Min., Eastwood/Poynton, 11 Sept. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

⁵¹ Min., Poynton/Sandys, 11 Sept. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

Current frustrations had impelled a few MLP leaders who advocated violence to consider that some more desperate measures must be taken, to arouse the people to take up arms, stated the report:

There is talk of a secret plot to murder the Prime Minister, probably during the Independence celebrations. To this end, those concerned are collecting funds and seeking a man willing to carry out this murder. It is realised by the M.L.P. extremists that an assassination although against the Prime Minister might endanger the Duke of Edinburgh. One extremist has said that this would be all to the good, as bound to cause a bigger sensation.

Mintoff, however, was not being told of this plot. The reason for this given by the informer was "because he (Mintoff) would be afraid of retaliation".⁵²

Borg Olivier was so far unaware of this, as was Mintoff. London took the matter very seriously indeed, also because the life of the Duke of Edinburgh could be imperiled in an attempt on Dr Borg Olivier's life. The C.O. immediately wanted to know what the risks of the plot materialising were, if Dr Borg Olivier had been informed of it, and what special security arrangements were being made, and were these adequate?⁵³

The UK Commissioner replied that it was three weeks since the information about the murder plot had been received and there had been no subsequent confirmation of it. He thought the risk of the plot "materialising" was remote but de Gray had taken the precaution of asking the Commander of Metropolitan Police Special Branch for assistance, and Chief Superintendent Suttling was arriving in Malta on the following day, Wednesday, 17th September.

⁵² Annex, int. rep., 7 Aug.-3 Sept. 1964, sec., para. 6, f. 3, 926/1823/48655.

⁵³ Cypher tel., Sandys/Wakefield, 15 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655. This reaction, marked 'Top Secret', was copied, among others, to M1 4B in the Army Department of the Ministry of Defence.

TOP SECRET AND GRETTON

- (9) The Parliamentary Group will be ordered to walk out when the Duke of Edinburgh starts to deliver his speech at the opening of Parliament. It was agreed that this would create a bigger sensation than if they were to walk out during the Prime Minister's speech. After the walk-out, the Parliamentary Group should make their way along Kingsway to the M.L.P. Club in Kingsway, where MINTOFF would address the crowd from the balcony. The Action Committee realise that the Parliamentary Group will have to make their way through a big crowd, and are prepared to let events take their course. One member of the Action Committee suggested that 700 "tough members" should be found to start trouble or defend MINTOFF in the event of trouble. A subsequent report, however, is that the M.L.P. Members will stay away from the opening. Current frustrations have impelled a few M.L.P. leaders who

advocate violence to consider that some more desperate measures must be taken, to arouse the people to take up arms. There is talk of a secret plot to murder the Prime Minister, probably during the Independence celebrations. To this end, those concerned are collecting funds and seeking a man willing to carry out this murder. It is realised by the M.L.P. extremists that an assassination although against the Prime Minister might endanger the Duke of Edinburgh. One extremist has said that this would be all to the good, as bound to cause a bigger sensation. However, MINTOFF is not being told of this plot "because he would be afraid of retaliation".

7. The M.L.P. have received an invitation, sent by Krishna Menon of India, to attend a conference on peaceful co-existence and nuclear disarmament in November, organised by the World Council of Peace. The M.L.P. are replying that they will send a delegation provided that free passages are granted.

/8.

TOP SECRET AND GRETTON

This report in early September of a plot by MLP extremists to assassinate Dr Borg Olivier, probably during the Independence celebrations, led to a full-scale Scotland Yard investigation, and the stepping up of security precautions.

The Prime Minister had *not* been informed. Special security arrangements were being made but Suttling would advise whether these were adequate.⁵⁴

On Tuesday 16th September a top level meeting was held with Mr Sandys in the Commonwealth Relations Office. This was also attended by Commander E. Jones from the Metropolitan Police (who was the Commander of Special Branch at Scotland Yard) and Mr P.L. Taylor from the Home Office. The meeting was called specifically to discuss the report of "talk in the Malta Labour Party of a plot to murder the Prime Minister of Malta, probably during the Independence Celebrations, with consequent risk to the Duke of Edinburgh".

In discussion it was agreed that whatever view was taken of the seriousness of this report, "we could not afford to take any risks". It had to be followed up immediately and fully. Mr Sandys therefore gave the following instructions. First, Chief Superintendent Suttling, a Senior Officer in the Special Branch, who had left for Malta that day, should prepare an assessment as to the extent of the danger. Second, if there was a serious risk, it would be necessary to take at once such exceptional measures as might be required; but even if the risk was slight, all reasonable precautions, short of extreme measures, should be taken to ensure the safety of the Duke of Edinburgh. Third, detailed information was required of the precautions being taken by the Malta Commissioner of Police to judge their adequacy. The Inspector General of Colonial Police, Sir Ivo Stourton, should go to Malta at once to obtain this information and discuss the position with the Commissioner of Police there. Fourth, enquiries should be made to find out why this information had been withheld from Dr Borg Olivier, so that a decision would be taken as to whether he should not be told.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Tel., Wakefield/Sandys, 16 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655.

⁵⁵ Record of a Meeting with the Colonial Secretary at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 16th September, 1964, in the C.R.O., top sec., 926/1823/48655. Together with Mr Sandys at the meeting there was also Lord Lansdowne, and five other C.O. officials, including Sir Hilton Poynton, Mr C. Eastwood and Mr J. Kisch.

On the same day Poynton cabled Wakefield to insist on a full report covering his assessment of the degree of risk and of the measures being taken. Mr Sandys considered that Dr Borg Olivier "ought also to be fully informed of these reports and of the security measures being taken". It was presumed that this could be done "without compromising source". Possibly it would be desirable also to let Mintoff know. "Perhaps you could suggest this to the Prime Minister."

Mr Sandys wished his own Police Advisor, Sir Ivo Stourton, to fly out urgently to discuss plans with Chief Superintendent Suttling and Commissioner de Gray. Although it was felt that de Gray would be averse from such a visit, it was important that Stourton had full cooperation. Wakefield was instructed to put this proposal to Borg Olivier and to report back urgently before 18.00 hours that same day as to whether Stourton's visit would be acceptable. Stourton could fly out that night catching a plane from London at 21.20 hours.⁵⁶ Wakefield phoned up in the late afternoon to say he had been unable to see Borg Olivier but he was sure it would be O.K. for Stourton to fly out that night. He would meet him and put him up. He was confident that he would be able "to fix this" with the Prime Minister in the morning.⁵⁷

That night, de Gray informed Borg Olivier of the reports. He also briefed him on the security measures being taken. Borg Olivier realised that the fullest possible precautions were necessary but was not himself "at all alarmed". Nor did he think it desirable to inform Mintoff about the reports.

On the morning of the following day, 17th September, Stourton met with the D.S.O.,⁵⁸ Suttling and others, including de Gray, and

⁵⁶ Cypher tel., Poynton/Wakefield, 16 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655.

⁵⁷ Min., H. Poynton, 16 Sept. 1964, top sec., 926/1823/48655.

⁵⁸ D.S.O. stands for Defence Security Officer (Mr John Venn).

TOP SECRET
INWARD TELEGRAM
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES

44

FROM MALTA (Sir E. Wakefield)

Cypher

D. 17th September, 1964.
R. 17th " " 16.10 hrs.

IMMEDIATE
TOP SECRET
No. 369

(43) Your telegram No. 631.
Following for Poynton.
Begins.

Stourton arrived this morning and has already had consultations with D.S.O. and Suttling. He has also seen Prime Minister who fully understands reason for visit and welcomes it as does De Grey.

2. Prime Minister was informed last night by De Grey of reports and of security measures being taken. He realises that fullest possible precautions are necessary but is not himself at all alarmed.

3. I suggested to Prime Minister that Mintoff should be informed about reports but he thought this undesirable.

4. Stourton will telegraph assessment to reach you tomorrow afternoon.

Ends.

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Sir Ivo Stourton was the Inspector General of Colonial Police. Chief Superintendent Suttling, who had arrived in Malta on the previous day, was a Senior Officer in the Special Branch, reporting to Commander E. Jones at Scotland Yard. It was at the behest of Sandys that de Gray informed Borg Olivier about the reported murder plot.

planned to telegraph back his assessment on the 18th, as he duly did.⁵⁹

Nothing had been volunteered of the murder plot by the "original source since he first mentioned it at the end of August". An attempt was made to approach him within the last 24 hours on specific aspects of the alleged plot: place, time, and method. It was not yet known "what if any information he will be able to produce".

Accurate advance information had however been obtained of the intended MLP directives on the behaviour of members during the celebrations. These directives had since been published, and showed that the MLP leadership had ordered non-violent activities. However, the plans showed that demonstrations, "while technically non-violent, may certainly be noisy, and could lead to broken heads".

Stourton referred in particular to three instances, which could cause problems. During the MLP meeting at their Headquarters on the afternoon of 19th September, loudspeakers would relay speeches to the crowd in the road at about the same time when His Royal Highness was expected to pass, at one point on his route, from the airport to Sant'Anton. On 20th September, party supporters would assemble in Valletta to make noisy demonstrations at appropriate periods during the official celebrations. MLP members should stay away from the Opening of Parliament ceremony, but MLP supporters should be present in streets outside the Palace to voice protests.

De Gray was confident that all this could be contained including, if necessary, a last-minute decision to change the Duke of Edinburgh's route. Additional unconfirmed information had just been received that some MLP district officials were

⁵⁹ Cypher tel., Wakefield/Poynton, 17 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655.

talking wildly of blowing up main power station, “rushing the platform” on some occasion, and throwing fireworks among crowd to cause confusion during flag-lowering ceremony on night of 20th September.

This appeared to be contrary to the MLP directives but Stourton was consulting urgently with de Gray, Suttling and the D.S.O. as to what action might be necessary.⁶⁰

Judging by Mintoff's discourse at this delicate stage, it would seem that having sown the wind he now risked reaping the whirlwind. He must certainly have had inkling that some of those he liked to call “hot-heads” were taking matters into their own hands, and to extremes. In warning against a “frontal attack” being “suicidal” because the “strong forces” ranged against them would “smash them”, Mintoff was trying to stop a blood bath; his timely intervention could well have prevented the civil strife to which his rousing speech may have incited. In August, when the murder plot was reported, twelve bren guns destined for the British Army in Libya had been stolen in Malta. For a fortnight Special Investigation Branch carried out interrogations to recover them; these included questioning Maltese civilians employed at the Army Ordnance Depot in Attard.⁶¹

Mintoff's public discourse also changed, especially after his Naxxar meeting in June, when he had warned that blood would be shed. Speaking in Birkirkara in July he said that the party should win “through the use of reason not by the shedding of blood”. He told those present to continue working “quietly” (*bil-kwiet*) for the good of their brother workers.⁶² A relative of one who was a leading MLP

⁶⁰ Cypher tel., Stourton/Poynton, 18 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655.

⁶¹ “Bren-Guns Missing”, *Malta News*, 2 Sept. 1964, p.1.

⁶² “Nirbhu Bir-Raġuni U Mhux Bit-Tixrid Ta' Demm”, *l-orizzont*, 6 July 1964, p.3; “Nirbhu Bir-Raġuni...Imma...”, *Il-Helsien*, 6 July 1964, p.1.

activist in the early Sixties⁶³ vividly recalls how worried his father had been just at this time, because of what was about to happen in Malta. The assassination was planned to take place shortly after Independence, when the Duke would have left. In the family, he remembers hearing the names of Dr Anton Buttigieg and of Mr Leli Tabone mentioned as the ones who were thought to have found out, and who intervened to dissuade those intent on perpetuating the crime;⁶⁴ it was probably they who alerted Mintofo to the very grave danger involved.⁶⁵ If so, this was a parallel situation to that experienced at about the same time in the GWU, when due to the moderating stance taken by Indri Cilia and others, the Union did not go along with the MLP executive's request to join the party in violent action if necessary.⁶⁶

De Gray was confident that any eventualities arising from the rumoured disturbances could be contained and he had already taken steps. He was ready to switch the Duke's route should conditions make it advisable. For security reasons, the decision to switch route would be taken at the latest possible moment. Arrangements had been made to put extra police on guard at the power station and to bring the Services' generator into use in the event of a disruption of the main electricity supply. To deal with any troubles during the Independence ceremonies, special groups of

⁶³ His mother was the sister of the militant dockyard employee Karmnu Zammit (nicknamed 'Barbettu'), a regular correspondent of *Il-Helsien* in the early Sixties.

⁶⁴ A dockyard fitter from Cospicua who was President of the MLP (1947-1959) as well as President of the GWU (1953-55), Leli Tabone (1911-1980) became general secretary of the Malta Technical and Clerical Association (1961-62) and Vice-President of the CMTU (1963-65). He served as Minister of Labour in the first Mintofo administration (1955-58).

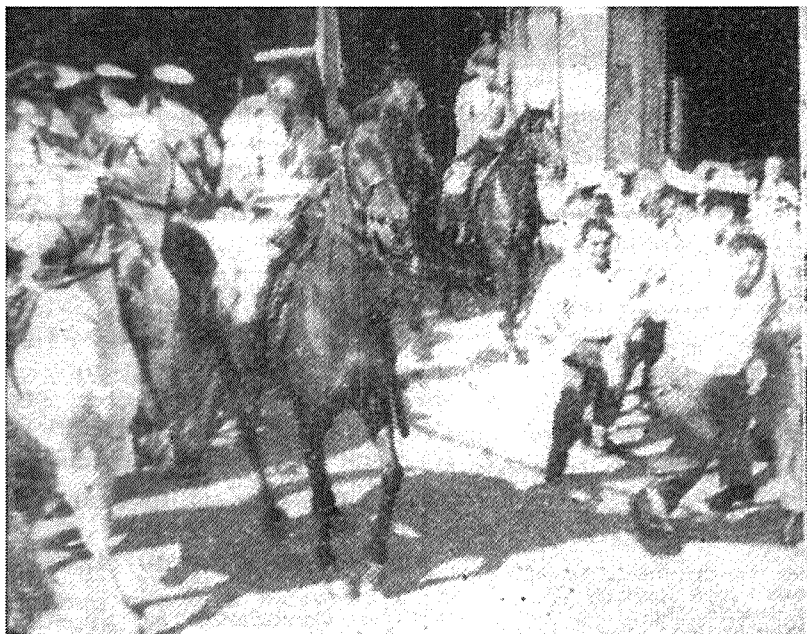
⁶⁵ Joseph Montfort was married to Karmnu Zammit's sister. The recollections and impressions referred to here are those recounted by Mr Montfort's son, Robert, and his grandson, Eric, as confided to this author in interviews, 12 Aug., 14 Aug. 1999. See also above, II, 14, esp. pp. 490-491.

⁶⁶ See above, II, 14, pp. 463-465.



The Speaker Mr Paolo Pace together with the Prime Minister and Cabinet members listen to Prince Philip reading the speech from the throne while the police clear the streets around the palace of rowdy MLP demonstrators.

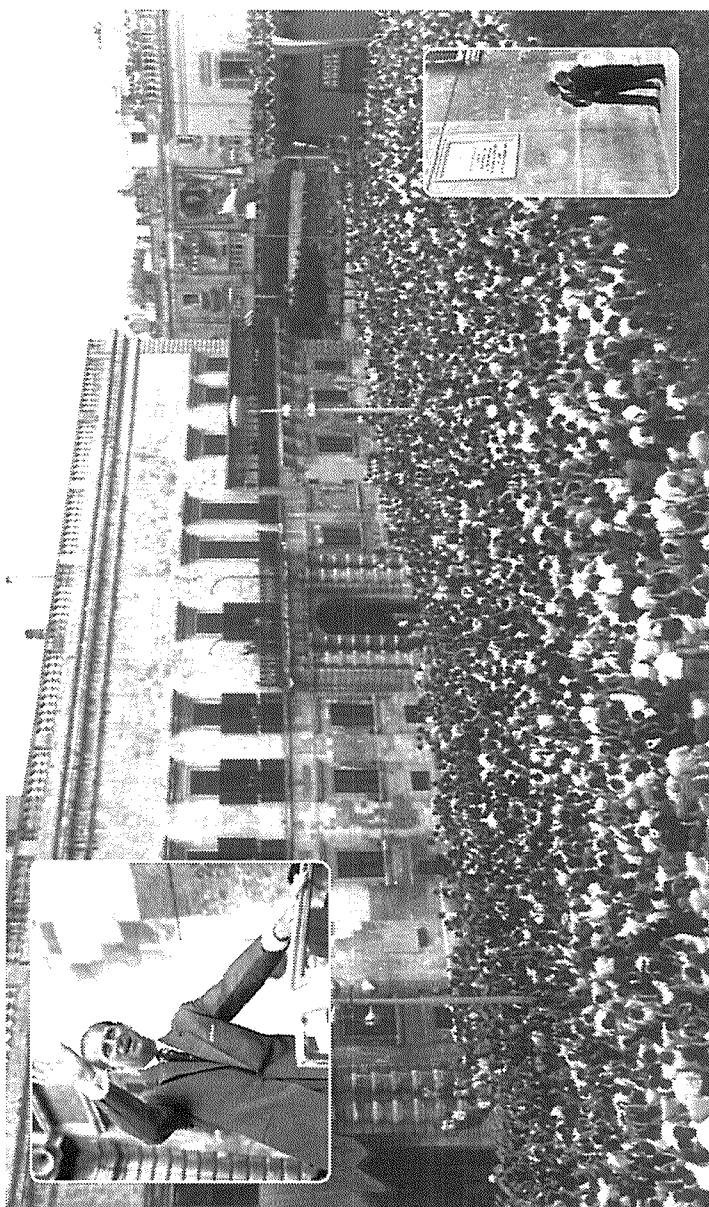




police had been "closely examined by us". De Gray's precautions were considered "sound". A copy of this report was intended for Commander Jones.⁶⁷

Between the 19th and the 22nd September MLP supporters caused some trouble, but not too much. Other than booing and some slogans like "Sandys Go Home", there were a few instances of stone-throwing and damage to cars reported on the day that the Duke arrived - his route was in fact changed. Dr Messina's car was hit near the Freedom Press, and when he stopped the Italian flag was torn from its bonnet. There were whistles and cat-calls in Valletta on the morning of Sunday 20th as the police, using cavalry, controlled the demonstrators while a *défilé* of floats depicting historical episodes and international organizations paraded down the streets. Hundreds of Labour supporters were in Valletta that morning. Superintendent Frank Tonna was stabbed in the abdomen in Kingsway in front of the Savoy cinema and rushed to hospital, while a man from Kalkara was caught red-handed throwing a grenade near the Cafe' Premier, close to the Governor's Palace. In the rush the culprit had failed to remove the grenade's 'safety pin' so it failed to explode. The hand grenade was confiscated by the police. In the *mêlée* several demonstrators were slightly injured; one, Alfred Frendo, was hit by a cavalry horse in Kingsway. Flip-flops and sandals littered the streets before their owners returned later to pick them up. Five men were charged with carrying arms illegally; another man, from Qrendi, was held for wounding a police constable. Other disturbances took place in Valletta on Monday 21st, when according to *Il-Helsien* "the Labourites dominated Valletta", and again on Tuesday 22nd, when at one point Bishop Galea's car was surrounded and pelted with pennies. There was a commotion during the State Opening of Parliament on Tuesday morning when Mintoff and other MPs looked out of the palace balcony angrily as Prince Philip was addressing the House to boos and chants while the police on foot and on horseback crushed onto the MLP supporters to clear the squares

⁶⁷ Cypher tel., Stourton/Poynton, 18 Sept. 1964, sec., 926/1823/48655.



Dr Borg Olivier and Prince Philip wave to the crowds from one of the palace balconies. The Duke leaves Valletta in an open car (inset, top left) after unveiling a commemorative plaque (inset, bottom right) inscribed with Malta's new coat-of-arms and the motto: *Virtute et Constantia*.

and streets around the palace. Labour MPs did not stay in the Hall of St Michael and St George to listen to the Duke's address; they only participated in the parliamentary sitting in the Tapestry Chamber.⁶⁸ A number of demonstrators were detained.

The main attraction, and the one most well attended, was on the night of Sunday 20th, starting at 10.30 p.m., when the flag-lowering and flag-raising ceremonies took place amidst appropriate spectacles, including music, song and dance. In one corner of the Floriana parade ground near the Phoenicia Hotel, since called the Independence Arena, a chorus of boos could be heard but this soon receded, as did the booers when the police moved them further away. There was some more booing, mixed with cheers, for the Duke, the Prime Minister, the Archbishop *et al*, at the opening of Parliament ceremony and on other occasions; but that was it.

On the morning of the 21st it was again at the Independence Arena that the more important and popular ceremonies took place, including the handing of the Independence documents by Prince Philip to Dr Borg Olivier, marking the transfer of power: sovereignty, at last.

During this unusually long weekend, with two public holidays added on, various other Independence events took place on land and sea, from band marches in towns and villages to skiing and yachting races. Schoolchildren rallied at the Independence Arena where they performed acrobatic feats, lit a flame, and warmly greeted the Prime Minister who toured around in an open jeep, hands raised acknowledging the cheers. *Honoris causa* degrees were conferred by the Royal University of Malta on Prince Philip, Dorman and Borg Olivier on Monday, while Sandys on Tuesday lay the foundation stone of the new university campus in Msida, which decorously enough was blessed by Cardinale.

⁶⁸ See the illustrated reports of these events and of the disturbances esp. in the *Times* and the *Sunday Times*, *Il-Haddiem*, *l-orizzont*, *Malta News* and *Il-Helsien*, 20-24 Sept. 1964, *passim*.



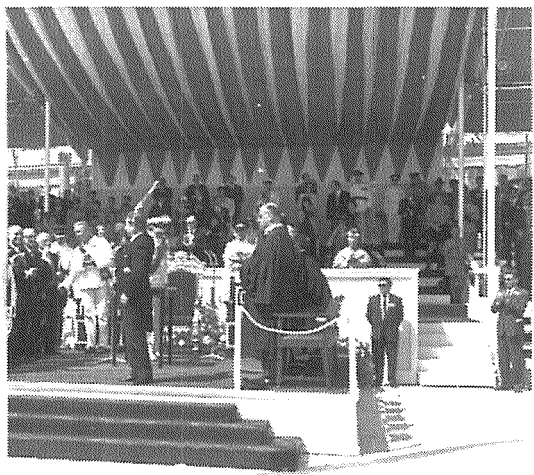
When on the stroke of midnight the red and white colours swiftly ran up the flagpole being vacated by the union jack, to the pealing of church bells, salutes and cries of “Viva Malta!”, there followed the most splendid display of fireworks over the surrounding bastions and harbours.

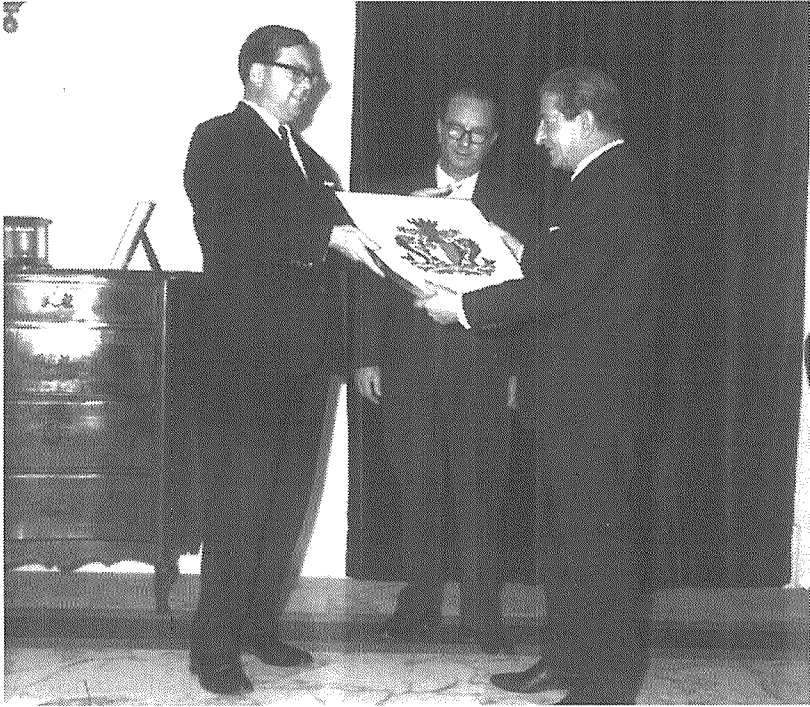
Emotions ran high mostly on the Sunday night, as midnight approached. Bands played as distinguished personalities arrived; strains from *Auld Lang Syne* drifted and floated around.⁶⁹ The Grand Harbour was lit up with naval units, the bastions flood-lit; an aura of anticipation seemed to envelop the place, under a September

⁶⁹ Even Ganado felt this, *Rajt Malta Tinbidel*, vol. 4, op.cit., p. 429.



The Duke of Edinburgh, on behalf of The Queen, formally transfers sovereignty to the Prime Minister of Malta in the Independence Arena, Floriana, on the morning of Sunday 21st September 1964. Below: a battery of TV crews and photographers record the scene as the Prime Minister waves the empowering constitutional instruments which the Duke had just handed him.





The prime minister being presented with the official heraldic emblem of the independent State of Malta, with a dolphin on either side of the crowned national colours retaining the George Cross.

moon. The event was highlighted by the presence of His Royal Highness and many dignitaries from so many different places. Prayers were said and thoughts raised to the Almighty for guidance, perseverance and unity. Malta's motto, inspired by a document dating back to earlier times was: *Virtute et Constantia*.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Cremona says he found this reference and Borg Olivier liked it. Cremona/Frendo interviews, June 1999.

The thronging crowds were moved, in some cases to tears, as the Maltese national colours were raised to loud cheers and the playing of the Maltese national anthem: *Lil din l-Art helwa, l-omm li tatna isimha...* (To this fair land, the mother whose name we bear...) Shouts of "Viva Malta!" came from many directions in the massed crowds, without any fear of thus falling foul of the law. Readings and speeches were partly lost in the commotion. It was, as Borg Olivier called it, an unforgettable day, when appealing at the same time for national unity, as did the Archbishop in his prayers.

Nobody was killed. There was no *coup d'état*. Borg Olivier may have been right after all not to be unduly perturbed by either the *coup d'état* or the assassination plot reports, although prevention was better than cure. Perhaps he knew the Maltese, including Mintoff and his party (who were after all Maltese like the rest) better than any British secret agent did. Still, some incidents and skirmishes could have had a worse outcome.

After midnight and before daybreak, there was the most spectacular display of fireworks from the bastions around the harbours. As the twenty-first of September dawned on Malta, it became a very special day indeed. It was a solemn beginning, in style, full of promise. As Borg Olivier put it in his speech on the morning of 21st September, Independence did not mean "we did not need anyone any more, or that we could now work less..."⁷¹

The Duke came and went safely, not having to bother even with any disruptive walk-out. Labour MPs just did not stay for The Queen's Speech. So much effort had gone into making that Day happen though - two very full years of negotiations, touch and go, with no breakthrough until the very end.

The twilight too, it turned out, had been taken care of. At the meeting of 25th July in London, when Sandys had confirmed to

⁷¹ See the Maltese text of his speech in R. Spiteri and A. Massa, *op.cit.*, pp. 164-167.



A fly-past of planes, a flight of doves. The church dominating the background is that dedicated to St Publius, venerated as Malta's first Catholic bishop converted by St Paul the Apostle in the first century.



Borg Olivier the Duke's arrival on the 19th September at 6 p.m., Giovanni Felice had remarked that 6 p.m. would be alright so long as it was still light.⁷² Perhaps he was preoccupied about security too. Whatever it was, that remark led to an investigation about the sunset, the twilight and the dusk on a September day in Malta.

The twilight find-out went like this. Almost certainly as a result of Felice's remark about the state of light at 6 p.m. just before the appointed day - and just as that day was itself being appointed - the Commonwealth Relations Office contacted R.A.F. Headquarters at Luqa. The Secretary of State's private secretary, N. B. J. Huijsman, communicated his discoveries to Rear-Admiral Bonham-Carter at Buckingham Palace. "I understand that there have been enquiries as to whether it would still be light in Malta at 6 p.m. on 19th September, if His Royal Highness were to arrive there at that time", Huijsman began before supplying the details:

...sunset on the 19th September will be at 1801 hours. From then until 1826 hours there will be the period of daylight which is, I believe, technically known as evening twilight, after which it gets dark. During evening twilight the stars start coming out and there is still a glow from the sun.⁷³

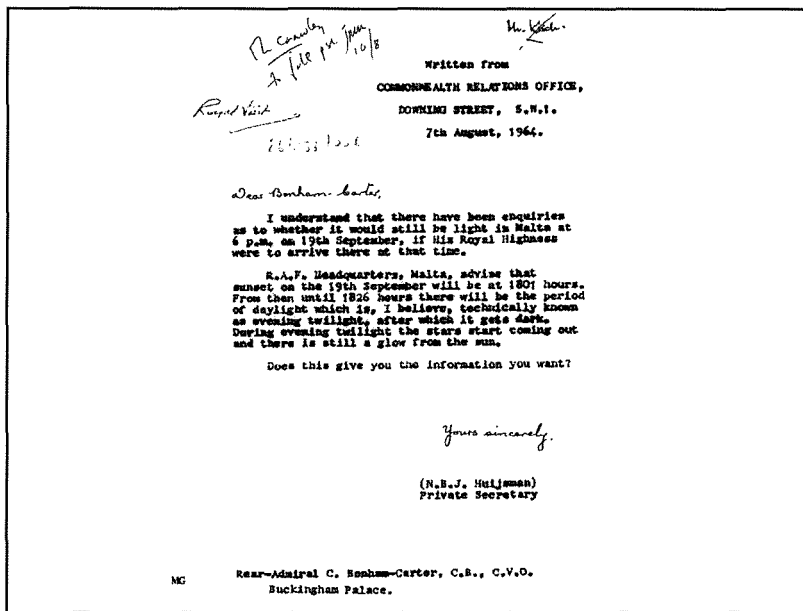
If Mr Huijsman expected gratitude for these enquiries, he was wrong. "I simply cannot imagine", retorted Admiral Bonham-Carter, "how you came to be bothered with such a footling enquiry which you have had to answer... If it came from my office, I apologise humbly, we are quite capable of finding such things out for ourselves."⁷⁴

The night of 20th September was still and humid, but the sky seemed somehow larger that night, perhaps because the Floriana parade

⁷² See above, p. 647.

⁷³ Huijsman/Bonham-Carter, 7 Aug. 1964, 926/1920/48583.

⁷⁴ Bonham-Carter/Huijsman, 13 Aug. 1964, 926/1920/48583.



The twilight investigation.

ground, where countless troops had marched and massed bands played, was the largest open space in a Maltese urban environment. It was a very Maltese night, but an exceptionally memorable one too. The glow in the hearts of those present was from the sense of occasion. The stars indeed came out, as promised by the organizers.

It had been a long twilight. At the break of dawn, a quite different day beckoned.

At the Colonial Office, a solitary official minuted a concluding minute, saying that this file was not concerned with anything that happened in Malta after midnight on 20th September - "and it may now be closed - at once".⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Min., C. Eastwood, 22 Sept. 1964, 926/1823/48655.

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Interviewees have included, over the years, Mr J. Attard Kingswell, Not. G. Bonello du Puis, Dr G. Borg Olivier, Dr A. Cachia Zammit, Dr C. Caruana, Mr A. Cassar, Dr Ġ. Cassar, Commissioner V. de Gray, Archbishop M. Gonzi, Mr G. E. Ferro, Dr A. Ganado, Dr D. Micallef, Dr J. Micallef Stafrace, Mr D. Mintoff, Chev. A. Montanaro, Mr E. Montefort, Dr A. Pardo, Dr V. Ragonesi, Not. J. Spiteri, Mr L. Spiteri, Mr P. Saliba, Dr V. Tabone, Mr K. Zammit.

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INDEX

- Abela, Col. J., 412
- Abela, Hon. Dr J., 251, 469, 474, 670, 671
- Abela, M., 623
- Abyssinian War, 121
- Accra, 653
- Acheson, D., 124
- Action Committee, 452, 463, 474, 670, 671
- Addolorata cemetery, 200, 281, 571
- Aden, 93, 94, 121, 284, 285, 449, 531, 585, 595, 597
- Admiralty Constabulary, 486, 487
- Advisory Council on Scientific Policy, 610
- Africa, 18, 87, 93, 94, 100, 113, 121, 123, 167, 211, 212, 220, 226, 322, 333, 389, 416, 419, 447, 457, 465, 469, 513, 517, 524, 525, 540, 541, 654
- Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO), 36, 38, 160, 165, 351, 352, 413, 431, 438, 440, 449, 472
- Afro-Asian Powers, 96
- Afro-Shirazi Party, 603
- Agius, G., 138
- Aids to Industries Ordinance, 373
- Aids to Industries Scheme, 66
- Akrotiri air base (Cyprus), 517, 552
- Alcia, General, 363, 364
- Alexandria, 585
- Algeria, 92, 423, 438, 439, 440, 469, 471
- Algerian Peace Committee, 439
- Aligieri, D., 162, 327, 356
- Alitalia, 346, 360
- Aloja, General, 540
- Amato Gauci, F. E., 649, 656
- Amsterdam, 180, 436, 437
- Anastasi, Magistrate J., 226
- Andreotti, G., 540
- Angevins, 355
- Anglican Communion, 582
- Anglo-Saxons, 389, 392
- Ankara, 617, 664, 665
- Ansaldo Shipyards, 351
- Appointed day, 169, 173, 244, 268, 405, 643, 690
- April, 28th (1958), 36, 474
- APS Bank, 22
- Aquilina, Prof. G., 52
- Arab-Israeli conflict, 92, 519
- Arab-Israeli conflicts, 519
- Arab-Israeli war, 470
- Arabia, 53, 94, 128
- Arabs, 355
- Aragonese, 355
- Archbishop of Canterbury, 581, 582, 583, 584, 651
- Argentina, 283
- Armstrong, W., 304, 311
- Army (British), 14, 110, 363, 384, 467, 476, 479, 488, 492, 514, 519, 531, 533, 540, 601, 604, 626, 672, 678
- Army and Navy Bar, 384
- Arrigo, E. G., 52

- Asquith, Lord, 236
 Athens, 617, 646, 647, 649, 661, 662, 664
 Attard, 383, 414, 515, 678
 Attard, Hon. C., 55, 254
 Attard Bezzina, Hon. E., 153, 156, 257
 Attard Kingswell, J., 16, 21, 128, 129, 130, 131, 134, 138, 139, 140, 156, 191, 364, 413, 418, 419, 420, 426, 431, 463, 464, 465, 666
 Attlee, C., 124
 Auberge d'Aragon, 106, 151, 196, 262, 573, 664
 Auberge de Castille, 491
 Australia, 15, 23, 46, 148, 167, 195, 236, 237, 244, 310, 347, 388, 390, 392, 394, 396, 397, 398, 399, 641
 Austria, 280, 352, 432, 580
 Awbery, Hon. S., 194, 206, 252
 Axisa, Maj. E. J., 24, 378
 Axisa, J. E., 52
 Axisa, J. F., 154, 656

 Baden, 280
 Bahamas, 180, 181
 Bailey, C. H., 74, 84, 105, 145, 146, 154, 220, 413, 425, 426, 427, 430, 505, 509, 587, 588, 589, 590, 628, 632
 Balfour, Miss H., 240
 Ball, Capt. A., 28
 Ball, C., 227, 237, 619
 Balmoral Castle, 647, 650, 651
 Balogh, T., 65, 373
 Banda, Sir H., 96, 120, 436
 Bandaranaike, Mrs, 120
 Barbados, 396
 Barbara, Hon. Miss A., 634, 668
 Barcelona, 26, 274, 585
 Bartolo, H.-J., 23, 24
 Ba'thist 'Resurrectionist' Group, 525
 Battle of Flowers, 40
 Battle of the Boyne, 266
 Bavaria, 280
 Beauport Development Corporation, 386
 Belgium, 395, 614
 Ben Bella, A., 329, 423, 439, 440
 Berlin, 123, 180
 Bernard, Fr. J., 120, 124, 250, 268, 269, 270, 369
Berqa, Il-, 54, 105, 161, 228, 248
 Bethlehem Steel, 425
 Biggs-Davison, Hon. Mr., 195
 Bin, A., 24, 618
 Birindelli, Admiral, 611
 Birkirkara, 353, 441, 678
Birmingham Post, The, 88
 Birzebuga, 585, 668
 Black Arrow missile, 316
 Black Knight missile, 316
 Bligh, Sir T., 642, 643
 Blood, Sir H., 15, 16, 45, 46, 48, 55, 114, 115, 155, 211, 254, 409
 Blue Steel missile, 316
 Blue Streak missile, 316
 Blue Water missile, 88
 Boffa, Sir P., 296, 333, 334, 464
 Bolivia, 283
 Bonaparte, General, 28
 Bond, H. P., 148, 154
 Bonham-Carter, Admiral, 643, 646, 690
 Bonello, Dr E. G., 225
 Bonn, 225, 352, 617, 664
 Boon, Dr. H. N., 614, 616
 Borg, G., 179
 Borg Olivier, Mrs A., 192
 Borg Olivier, Hon. Dr G., 15, 21, 31, 32, 35, 39, 43, 45, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 121, 123, 132, 134, 136, 140, 141, 142, 144, 146, 147, 150, 151, 153, 154, 156, 158, 161, 166, 169, 173, 174, 175, 177, 179, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193,

- 194, 195, 197, 198, 199, 202, 203,
204, 205, 206, 207, 210, 211, 212,
215, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 224,
225, 226, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232,
233, 234, 235, 242, 243, 244, 245,
248, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255,
257, 258, 260, 262, 268, 271, 275,
278, 283, 284, 286, 288, 289, 290,
293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299,
300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306,
307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313,
314, 315, 316, 321, 322, 325, 326,
327, 328, 329, 334, 336, 337, 338,
339, 342, 343, 344, 346, 347, 348,
359, 363, 366, 367, 368, 371, 378,
389, 396, 397, 404, 407, 409, 411,
420, 421, 422, 427, 429, 432, 434,
439, 446, 452, 457, 458, 459, 472,
476, 480, 481, 483, 492, 493, 495,
496, 497, 498, 500, 506, 508, 510,
522, 534, 535, 536, 538, 548, 549,
552, 555, 559, 560, 562, 563, 564,
565, 566, 567, 571, 572, 573, 574,
575, 578, 579, 580, 581, 583, 584,
585, 586, 587, 590, 591, 592, 594,
595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601,
602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 609,
610, 611, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623,
624, 626, 627, 635, 637, 638, 639,
640, 641, 642, 646, 647, 648, 649,
651, 653, 654, 655, 657, 658, 659,
662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 672,
673, 674, 675, 683, 684, 687, 688,
690
Borg Olivier, Hon. Dr P., 55, 443, 638
Borg Olivier, J., 434
Boston, 275
Bottomley, Hon. A., 154, 233, 234,
572
Boumedienne, H., 440
Boyd-Carpenter, Hon. J., 154
Bradford, E., 306
Brazil, 283, 654
'Break with Britain' resolution, 32, 37,
69
Bren guns, 678
Briguglio, Dr. L., 389
British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), 515
British Broadcasting Corporation
(BBC), 59, 227, 240, 259, 260, 262
British Council of Churches, 567, 581
British Defence Committee (Malta), 476
British European Airways (BEA), 145,
146, 192, 346, 350, 360, 361, 395
British Forces, 99, 110, 145, 149, 167,
186, 297, 442, 449, 470, 480, 483,
484, 495, 499, 504, 507, 526, 605,
607, 624, 631
British Guiana, 19, 186, 303, 304, 435,
549, 630
British Labour Party, 14, 180, 406,
409, 437, 445, 449, 634, 668, 669
Broadcasting, 47, 50, 51, 52, 136, 170,
177, 178, 201, 227, 228, 239, 240,
261, 318, 421, 423, 424, 440, 451,
452, 469, 670
Broadcasting Authority (Malta), 50,
136, 201, 239, 424, 670
Broadley, J. K. E., 325, 326
Brosio, M., 618
Brown, Hon. G., 624, 633
Brussels, 24, 75, 90, 342, 611, 617, 664
Buckingham Palace, 646, 649, 650, 690
Buckinghamshire, 597
Bugibba, 383, 384
Buhagiar, Bishop A. M., 168, 238
Buhagiar, Hon. Dr F., 168
Bundy, McG., 618, 619
Burial rights, 198, 200, 223, 282, 448,
569, 665
Burmarrad, 600
Busuttill, Prof. E., 225
Butler, Hon. R. A., 14, 213, 286, 287,
599
Buttigieg, Hon. Dr A., 38, 42, 43, 56,
139, 153, 156, 180, 336, 425, 437,
446, 679
Cable and Wireless Ltd, 261, 541
Cachia, R., 52
Cachia Zammit, Hon. Dr A., 55, 389,
390, 392, 393, 394, 397, 638

- Cafe' Premier, 682
 Cagiano de Azevedo, Prof., 358
 Cain, C., 305
 Cain, P. J., 18
 Cairo, 36, 38, 424, 439, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 455
 Cairo Radio, 424, 452
 Callaghan, Hon. J., 154
 Calleja, Fr Ph., 397
 Callus, A. M., 131, 132, 134
 Cambodia, 160
 Cambridge, 23, 378, 438, 582
 Cameroons, 121
 Camilleri, Hon. Dr B., 151, 153, 155, 156, 228, 438, 455
 Camilleri, Hon. Dr G. M., 151, 153
 Canada, 167, 181, 244, 310, 347, 388, 393, 395, 398, 399, 614
 Candlemas ceremony, 67, 238, 242, 350, 372, 469
 Canon Law, 169, 171, 199, 268, 270, 272, 280, 281, 282, 583
 Carachi, P., 45
 Caravaggio paintings, 164, 354
 Cardinale, Mgr, 274, 565, 584, 684
 CARE programme, 298
 Caribbean, 400
Caronia, 428
 Carrington, Lord, 154, 395, 456, 504, 522, 523
 Carthage, 355
 Caruana, Archbishop M., 43
 Caruana, Hon. Dr C., 15, 21, 55, 192, 251, 253, 560, 638, 649, 663, 664
 Caruana, Hon. E., 248
 Caruana Curran, Dr M., 304
 Caruana Demajo, Hon. Dr T., 55, 192, 638
 Casaroli, Cardinal, 280
 Cassar, Hon. Dr J., 334
 Cassar, J., 385, 422
 Cassar Galea, Hon. Dr J., 151, 153, 155, 156
 Castillo, Maj. V., 536, 649, 663
 Castle, Hon. Mrs B., 463, 633
 Cassar Pullicino, G., 567
 Castro, Fidel, 38, 441
 Catholic Action, 397
 Catholic Emancipation Act, 266
Catholic Herald, The, 222
 Catholicism, 152, 162, 169, 238, 255, 266
 Censorship, 172
 Central Telephone Exchange, 476
 Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), 517
 Ceylon, 120, 499
 Channel Islands, 386
 Chase Manhattan Bank, 305
 Chatillon, 361, 363, 365, 378, 380
 Chaudhuri, N., 128
 Cheetham, J., 339, 345, 364
 Chequers, 597, 620, 623
 Chester, Bishop of, 567, 568, 569, 572, 573, 575, 576, 577, 580, 581, 583, 636
 Chiang Kai-shek, 657, 663
 Chiefs of Staff, 14, 100, 306, 490, 492, 493, 504, 506, 510, 514, 515, 516, 517, 520, 521, 540, 542, 551, 552, 554, 585, 626
 Chiefs of Staff Committee, 492, 504, 510, 520, 521, 585
 Chile, 283
 China, 323, 657, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663
 Chinese, 352, 603, 657, 659, 660, 661, 662
 Christian Democrats (Italian), 328, 329
 Christian Workers Party (CWP), 15, 57, 127, 135, 136, 156, 167, 196, 232, 466
 Christianity, 355, 661
 Churchill, Sir W., 124, 130, 220, 636
 Cicognani, Cardinal, 222
 Cigogna, Dr F., 359
 Cilia, I., 464, 679
 Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean (CINCAFMED), 508
 Ċirkewwa, 383
 Citizenship, 110, 111, 136, 156, 166, 167, 244, 618

- Civil Law, 204, 272, 281, 282
 Civil marriage, 39, 165, 171, 172, 199,
 223, 266, 271, 272, 274, 275, 278,
 280, 281, 282, 283, 429, 575, 576
 Civil Service, 47, 58, 59, 132, 357, 430,
 535, 623
 Clive, Lord, 124
 Cold War, 92, 115, 160, 657
 Coleiro, Mgr. E., 354, 355
 Coleiro, Prof. C., 536
 Colombia, 281, 283
 Colombo, Hon. Dr A., 334
 Colombo, Hon. E., 342
 Colombo (Sri Lanka), 653
 Columbus, Prof. C., 664
 Colonial Development and Welfare
 Fund, 72, 373, 383
 Comino, 383, 386
 Commissioner of Police, 52, 334, 462, 466,
 467, 476, 477, 478, 481, 485, 674
 Committee of 24 (UN), 160, 352, 406,
 407, 434, 435, 629
 Committee of One Hundred, 470
 Common Market (European Economic
 Community – EEC), 55, 75, 77,
 90, 108, 117, 123, 181, 329, 332,
 333, 342, 343, 356, 366, 603
 Commonwealth Economic Consultative
 Council, 191
 Commonwealth membership, 116, 158,
 187, 207, 243, 347, 429, 653
 Commonwealth Parliamentary
 Association, 154, 664
 Commonwealth Prime Ministers'
 Conferences, 115
 Communism, 36, 93, 124, 239, 245,
 442, 446, 657
 Communists, 32, 38, 42, 85, 95, 120,
 160, 165, 186, 237, 239, 323, 328,
 334, 352, 353, 363, 365, 367, 368,
 369, 413, 416, 431, 433, 434, 442,
 443, 444, 451, 501, 516, 518, 520,
 532, 533, 584, 611, 657, 659, 660,
 661
 Confederation of Malta Trade Unions
 (CMTU), 131, 132, 679
 Confindustria, 351, 359, 361
 Conservative Party (British), 14, 43,
 66, 85, 96, 115, 146, 163, 187,
 226, 248, 271, 317, 329, 406, 543,
 571
 Consultative Assembly (Council of
 Europe), 655
 Contingency Fund, 61
 Cook Islands, 392
 Copenhagen, 617, 664
 Coppola, Fr., 155
 Corinthia Palace Hotel, 383
 Coronation, 384
Corriere della Sera, II, 276, 351
 Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, 168
 Cospicua, 55, 223, 224, 287, 491, 679
 Costa Rica, 283
Côte d'Or Hotel, 383
 Cottonera, 43, 403
 Council of Administration (Dockyard),
 147, 154, 189, 191, 427, 429, 589,
 590
 Council of Europe, 23, 109, 180, 367,
 368, 653, 655
coup d'état, 189, 242, 409, 410, 418,
 440, 441, 451, 455, 461, 462, 466,
 469, 470, 476, 485, 487, 489, 492,
 526, 528, 553, 603, 604, 688
 Crawley, E. J., 154, 156, 325, 331, 338,
 343, 344, 368, 457, 537
 Creasy, Sir G., 155, 663
 Cremona, D., 56, 139, 141, 244, 250,
 452, 469, 667
 Cremona, Prof. J. J., 16, 21, 24, 61, 72,
 115, 132, 150, 151, 152, 153, 156,
 167, 168, 192, 202, 477, 483, 536,
 562, 563, 575, 583, 621, 622, 687
 Criminal Code, 171, 562
 Croce, B., 20
 Crown Hotel, 384
 Crusades, 642
 Cuba, 19, 38, 124, 127, 134, 160, 283,
 441, 549
 Cuban missile crisis, 123
 Cullis, M., 52
 Cumberland Hotel, 384

- Cumming-Bruce, Sir F., 392, 393, 506,
507, 533, 550, 552
- Curia, 97, 172, 173, 221, 429
- Curzon, Earl, 124
- Cuschieri, E., 61, 156, 252, 378, 477,
536
- Cyprus, 19, 64, 87, 92, 94, 115, 121,
144, 158, 162, 209, 211, 217, 226,
238, 381, 400, 402, 408, 413, 416,
419, 420, 465, 466, 502, 514, 517,
518, 519, 520, 521, 523, 526, 527,
529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 539,
540, 542, 543, 548, 552, 576, 585,
593, 609, 619, 625, 626
- Cyrenaica, 524, 525
- Czech Embassy, 352
- Czechoslovakia, 352, 432
- Daily Express, The*, 90
- Daily Mail, The*, 87, 91, 96, 314, 326
- Daily Telegraph, The*, 15, 24, 93, 467, 619
- Dallas, 386
- Dallas, K., 428
- Dalli, Z., 353, 431, 449
- Dall'Oglio, Prof. G., 342
- D'Altavilla, R., 355
- Dar-es-Salaam, 38, 432
- Davis, Air Vice Marshal, 283, 395, 498,
507, 509
- Debono, Magistrate J., 226
- De Gasperi, A., 330, 334
- De Gaulle, C., 124, 438
- De Gray, V., 16, 21, 41, 334, 474, 476,
477, 482, 560, 667, 672, 675, 676,
678
- De Marco, Prof. G., 7, 20
- De Staercke, Mr A., 616
- De Winton, M. G., 154, 156
- Dean, Sir P., 305, 654
- Decolonization, 3, 17, 19, 265, 347,
400, 406
- Defence Agreement, 100, 101, 102,
110, 114, 116, 128, 129, 130, 138,
139, 141, 145, 146, 179, 193, 231,
243, 273, 302, 309, 326, 367, 416,
417, 421, 423, 429, 434, 440, 443,
451, 452, 455, 481, 483, 495, 497,
498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 504, 511,
513, 522, 530, 550, 552, 585, 586,
589, 590, 591, 595, 598, 599, 602,
605, 607, 608, 609, 620, 623, 631,
632, 668, 669, 670
- Defence and Oversea Policy
Committee (DOPC), 285, 528,
545, 547, 551, 599
- Defence policy, 77, 88, 143, 191, 609,
620
- Delhi, 653
- Delimara, 585
- Democracy, 20, 23, 38, 151, 198, 243,
265, 267, 327
- Democratic Nationalist Party (DNP),
15, 127, 134, 138, 156, 196, 232
- Detroit, 294, 305
- Development Plans, 32, 61, 65, 90,
373, 627
- Devonshire, Duke of, 154
- Dichiarazione dei diritti*, 28, 269
- Dickie, J., 87
- Diocesan Commission, 215
- Di Pietro, Prof. A., 348
- Disarmament, 323, 433
- Discharges, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 88, 105,
106, 131, 184, 190, 191, 218, 350,
380, 397, 399, 413, 425, 426, 428,
435
- Disengagement, 17, 86, 400
- Divorce, 171, 172, 199, 220, 272, 571
- Dixon, Sir C., 156
- Dobbie, Prof. E., 663
- Dockyard, 18, 32, 36, 43, 56, 70, 73,
74, 84, 105, 111, 130, 134, 143,
146, 147, 184, 190, 191, 218, 314,
326, 339, 362, 368, 373, 397, 403,
404, 407, 413, 419, 423, 424, 425,
426, 427, 436, 464, 465, 486, 487,
505, 506, 508, 509, 510, 511, 515,
587, 589, 590, 591, 608, 627, 628,
632, 642, 668, 669, 679
- Dockyard Metalworkers Section, 424
- Dodd, P. H. F., 626

- Dominican Republic, 283
 Dominion Status, 23, 29, 136, 161
 Dorchester Hotel, 59
 Dorman, Sir M., 15, 16, 67, 85, 143,
 153, 154, 205, 225, 276, 277, 278,
 280, 288, 319, 338, 350, 362, 363,
 364, 372, 409, 410, 437, 460, 466,
 468, 469, 476, 477, 479, 480, 481,
 484, 491, 534, 535, 536, 537, 616,
 651, 664, 671, 684
 Dougall, G., 52
 Douglas of Barloch, Lord, 575
 Douglas-Home, Sir A., 14, 115, 118,
 213, 288, 338, 435, 495, 539, 545,
 546, 547, 548, 550, 551, 596, 597,
 598, 599, 642, 656
 Dowty, 59
 Dragonara Casino, 180, 376, 381, 383,
 386, 451
 Driberg, Hon T., 180, 233, 234, 251,
 437, 571, 632
 Dublin, 236
 Duke of Edinburgh, 383, 642, 643,
 644, 651, 646, 647, 670, 672, 674,
 680, 682, 683, 684, 686
 Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, 383
 Dulles, J. F., 297
 Durham, 582

 East Germans, 603
 Easter Rising, 236
 Eastwood, C., 53, 59, 102, 104, 116,
 135, 139, 145, 154, 156, 184, 194,
 202, 215, 275, 289, 290, 299, 320,
 337, 351, 390, 393, 395, 396, 398,
 438, 535, 536, 537, 548, 563, 584,
 589, 590, 653, 671, 674, 691, 692
 Economic Committee, 64, 428
 Economic dependence, 62
 Economic diversification, 62, 65, 88,
 111, 131, 147, 361, 371, 372, 400,
 404, 585, 623
 Economic Planning, 55, 60, 66, 359,
 373
Economist, The, 16, 93, 95, 163, 360, 381
 Ecuador, 283

 Eden, Sir A., 30, 39
 Edison Group, 359
 Education, 19, 23, 52, 55, 62, 71, 84,
 160, 170, 281, 288, 339, 356, 358,
 373, 405, 536, 665
 Egypt, 19, 92, 120, 121, 164, 381, 403,
 408, 409, 423, 424, 449, 451, 452,
 453, 469, 470, 519, 529, 606
 El Adem airfield (Libya), 162, 517,
 523, 528, 531, 542, 543, 552
 Elections (1962), 72, 136, 174, 220
 El Salvador, 283
 Electoral (Polling) Ordinance, 288
 Electoral Law, 168, 284, 285, 286, 288,
 289, 560, 565, 566, 620, 629, 635,
 665
 Electoral Reform Society, 267
 Elgin, Lord, 124
 Eliseo Hotel, 351
 Elwyn Jones, Sir R., 226
 Emergency Powers, 36, 420, 433, 457,
 460
 Emigration, 18, 55, 67, 129, 146, 147,
 195, 237, 297, 298, 365, 371, 372,
 380, 388, 389, 390, 391, 393, 394,
 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 404, 405,
 511, 536, 621, 624, 631
 Empire, 19, 28, 87, 109, 120, 124, 126,
 127, 130, 236, 237, 238, 317, 329,
 347, 390, 400, 402, 443, 602, 640,
 641, 643, 658
 Employment, 55, 62, 63, 70, 74, 84,
 105, 130, 140, 149, 167, 372, 373,
 380, 393, 396, 397, 428, 506, 507,
 508, 510, 601, 635
 E.N.I., 351, 360, 365
 Enlightenment, 269
 Enrico di Malta, 355
 EOKA, 527
 Erskine May, 197
 Esso, 304, 525
 Ethiopia, 333
 Etna, 328
 EU, 21
 Evatt, H. V., 237
 Exemption clauses, 270, 288, 570

- Fabian Society, 163
 Fabri, G., 378
 Factories, 66, 147, 297, 363, 378, 380, 386, 441
 Fairclough, A. J., 101, 104, 111, 114, 154, 156, 331, 338, 390, 392, 395, 397, 398, 507, 537, 547
 Fanfani, A., 327, 339, 342, 348, 353, 356, 446
 Fanon, F., 19
 Far East, 517, 518, 523, 531
 Farrugia, Chev. A. P., 22, 24
 Farrugia, Dr R., 134, 156
 Farsons brewery, 380, 422
 Fascism, 329, 357
 Federation of Arab Trade Unions, 455
 Federation of Industries, 359
 Felice, Dr G., 15, 55, 106, 153, 156, 183, 230, 251, 253, 288, 327, 342, 358, 359, 360, 376, 385, 447, 476, 560, 586, 638, 646, 647, 690
 Felice, Dr M., 151
 Fenech, J., 52
 Ferret squadron, 489
 Ferro, G. E., 39, 322
 Feudalism, 659
 FIAT, 351, 360
 Financial Agreement, 111, 141, 186, 188, 189, 360, 416, 436, 550, 599, 620, 623, 624, 627, 636, 669
 Financial aid, 17, 35, 60, 69, 99, 135, 141, 148, 159, 183, 184, 195, 300, 308, 337, 339, 429, 435, 436, 441, 445, 451, 469, 534, 552, 606, 621, 631
Financial Times, The, 93, 208, 588
 First National City Bank, 305
 First World War, 29, 236, 237, 238, 328
 Fisher, Hon N., 154, 206
 Floriana, 90, 134, 194, 239, 255, 295, 354, 383, 410, 413, 467, 468, 617, 684, 686, 690
 Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), 360, 663
 Foot, D., 156
 Foreign Office, British, 13, 101, 271, 275, 278, 282, 283, 318, 324, 330, 331, 337, 338, 343, 345, 349, 367, 368, 369, 389, 398, 505, 521, 528, 542, 596, 611, 612, 614, 625, 659, 660, 661, 665
 Foreign Office, Maltese, 655, 664
 Formosa, Magistrate J. M., 226
 Formosa, Capt. V., 136, 137
 Formosa (Taiwan), 657, 660
 Fornari, Sig., 362, 363
Forward 'Il Quddiem, 228
 Foster-Sutton, Sir S., 226, 239, 240, 241
 France, 28, 29, 90, 92, 109, 120, 130, 167, 181, 265, 269, 308, 316, 327, 343, 381, 404, 438, 440, 470, 518, 614, 617, 664
 Franco, F., 239, 442, 443, 444, 581
 Fraser, Hon H., 51, 154
 Frederick II, 355
 Free Port project, 381, 585, 586, 587
 Freedom Press, 352, 407, 418, 432, 451, 670, 682
 Freemasonry, 218
 Freetown, 653
 Frendo, A., 682
 Frendo, Dr V., 169
 Frewen, Sir J., 529
 Friends of Malta G.C., 663
 Fromm, E., 119
 Frost, Major-General J., 476, 491
 Gaitskell, Hon. H., 4, 50
 Gaja, Sig., 369
 Galea, Bishop E., 172, 173, 682
 Galea Enriquez, C., 359, 360
 Gallagher, J., 18
 Galsworthy, A. J., 61, 72, 154, 397, 609
 Gambia, 654
 Ganado Dr A., 134, 156, 196
 Ganado, Hon. Dr H., 15, 22, 55, 104, 127, 134, 135, 136, 138, 153, 157, 158, 160, 163, 170, 188, 195, 196, 199, 205, 206, 221, 223, 228, 229, 232, 242, 245, 246, 255, 268, 269, 270, 368, 458, 611, 685

- Canado, Prof. J. M., 204
 Garner, Sir S., 154, 653
 Gatt, A., 304
 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 342
 General Retailers and Traders Union (GRTU), 132
 General Workers Union (GWU), 16,
 23, 30, 64, 96, 105, 128, 129, 132,
 138, 139, 148, 185, 225, 228, 232,
 243, 255, 319, 413, 416, 418, 419,
 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427,
 428, 429, 430, 431, 434, 435, 452,
 453, 463, 464, 465, 473, 509, 666,
 667, 668, 679
 Geneva, 342, 381, 397, 398, 431
 Genoa, 351, 360
 George Cross, 73, 87, 129, 166, 610,
 621, 687
 George VI, 239
 Germany, 23, 90, 94, 180, 236, 280,
 352, 395, 432, 467, 472, 480, 613,
 614
 Ghana, 120, 211, 323, 549
 G?axaq, Hal, 44
 Gibraltar, 19, 94, 162, 274, 318, 358,
 381, 395, 408, 518
 Giuriati, Admiral, 363, 364, 540
 Glasgow, Lord, 636
 Glory of England Bar, 384
 Godber, Hon. J. B., 154
 Gold Coast, 120, 123
 Golden Bay, 383
 Gondoliers Suite (Savoy Hotel), 567
 Gonzi, Archbishop M., 15, 21, 22, 36,
 39, 41, 43, 44, 49, 97, 98, 157,
 163, 164, 170, 177, 184, 188, 198,
 211, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222, 223,
 224, 230, 232, 233, 234, 236, 237,
 238, 239, 240, 252, 253, 261, 264,
 267, 269, 271, 276, 278, 279, 284,
 285, 288, 345, 349, 364, 366, 413,
 441, 442, 443, 444, 452, 465, 548
 Gordon-Smith, D. G., 563, 621, 622
 Gouder, Magistrate G. F., 226
 Government Savings Bank, 61
 Gozo, 15, 29, 59, 208, 226, 256, 269,
 328, 383, 384
 Graigner, Miss B. M., 154
 Grand Harbour, 43, 355, 419, 487,
 541, 573, 685
 Grantham, Sir G., 55, 155, 663, 671
 Grattan-Bellow, Sir H., 154
 Great Siege, 28, 306, 308, 597
 Greece, 75, 162, 381, 518, 526, 576,
 577, 593, 614, 647, 665
 Greek Islands, 94
 Greenhill, D., 305
 Grewe, Dr W. G., 613, 614, 615
 Grimond, Hon. J., 229, 632
 Gronchi, G., 446
 Gross National Product, 385, 400
 Guardamangia, 410
Guardian, The, 85, 86, 163
 Gui, Prof., 354, 356, 357
 Gunta Diocesana (Junta), 137, 250,
 270, 429, 443, 446
 Guy Fawkes, 266
 H.M.S. Troubridge, 147, 522, 590
Haddiem, il-, 157, 228, 231, 248, 426,
 475, 684
 Hal Far, 296, 323, 447, 515, 552, 585,
 586, 587, 600, 626
 Hall, B. B., 179
 Hall of St Michael and St George, 684
 Hamburg, 585, 586
 Hamilton, Admiral Sir J., 540, 541,
 542
 Harding, Prof. H., 225
 Harris, Sir R., 154
 Hart, Hon. Mrs. J., 633
 Hastings, Rawdon, 181
 Hayday, A., 155
 Hayday, F., 46
 Hayes, C. J., 154
 Hayman, P., 52
 Haymarket, 66, 378
 Headquarters Allied Forces
 Mediterranean (HAFMED), 24,
 90, 193, 241, 295, 354, 541, 600,
 601, 611, 613, 617, 618, 619, 664

- Heads of Services Committee, 497
Helsien, Il-, 36, 38, 45, 96, 105, 117,
 151, 157, 177, 220, 250, 251, 274,
 313, 335, 418, 424, 433, 444, 447,
 451, 467, 561, 596, 666, 678, 679,
 682, 684
 Healey, Hon. D., 154
 Hendy, C., 397
 Hennings, J., 294, 295, 300, 301, 303,
 304, 306, 310, 311, 312, 315
 Henry VIII, 653
 Higham, J. D., 154, 551
 Hilton Hotel project, 145, 154, 295,
 309, 376, 383, 386, 427, 671, 674
 Hird, K. J., 396
 HISTADRUT (Israel), 415, 418
 Hitler, A., 640
 Hobden, R., 252
 Hockady, A., 591, 597, 600
 Hodson, D. M., 262
 Holland, Hon. Dr P., 56, 471
 Holland-Martin, Admiral D., 477, 481,
 483, 484, 485, 486, 492, 496, 497,
 498, 500, 503, 505, 506, 507, 508,
 511, 513, 523, 528, 529, 540, 548,
 549
 Holy Loch, 317, 318
 Holy See (Vatican), 19, 59, 183, 188,
 221, 270, 271, 274, 275, 276, 278,
 280, 283, 285, 286, 288, 289, 332,
 560, 564, 575, 614, 617, 663
 Home Rule Bill, 236
 Honduras, 283
 Hong Kong, 358
 Hood Philips, Prof. O., 156
 Hopkins, A., 18, 524
 Howard, Hon. Chev. J., 357
 Hubbalit Developments Ltd, 386
 Hughes, B., 206, 237
 Hughes, Hon. Mr H., 206
 Huijsman, N. B. J., 154, 209, 396, 588,
 591, 597, 600, 622, 643, 646, 647,
 690
 Hull, Sir R., 96, 552
 Human Rights, 185, 273, 284, 285,
 437, 458
 Humbaraci, A., 439
 Hymn to the Red Flag, 163
 Hyzler, Hon. Dr A. V., 222, 441
 Hyzler, Hon. Prof. J., 208
 Ibadan, 226
 Idris, King,
 Ignis Synthetic Fibres, 361
 'il-Vitorja', 640
 Independence Arena, 653, 684, 686
 Independence Day, 21, 484, 500, 554,
 609, 618, 637, 640, 642, 647, 665,
 670
 India, 15, 53, 94, 120, 124, 181, 323,
 352, 403
 Indian Ocean, 603
 Industrialisation, 62, 63, 66, 67, 146,
 147, 148, 352, 359, 360, 361, 362,
 373, 378, 380, 381
 Inge, Dean, 182
 Integration, 29, 30, 31, 36, 42, 61, 66,
 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 76, 84, 95, 114,
 130, 161, 162, 164, 223, 227, 229,
 238, 259, 262, 328, 329, 334, 336,
 345, 350, 408, 458, 461, 602, 634,
 635
 Intelligence gathering, 178, 185, 242,
 320, 409, 411, 417, 431, 460, 492,
 533
 Inter-University Council, 664
 Interdict, 38, 45, 141, 164, 183, 199,
 200, 203, 222, 269, 281, 289, 452,
 564
 Intergovernmental Committee for
 European Migration (ICEM), 310,
 397, 663
 Internal Security Plan, 476, 484, 490,
 491, 492
 International Bank for Reconstruction
 and Development (World Bank),
 66, 294, 299, 360, 663
 International Civil Aviation
 Organization, 322
 International Confederation of Free
 trade unions (ICFTU), 418, 419,
 420

- International Institute of Science and Technology, 610
 International Labour Organisation (ILO), 431, 663
 International Students' Centre, 383
 Iraq, 470
 Ireland, 84, 238, 266, 283, 609
 I.R.I., 351
 Iron Curtain, 223, 432
 Isbister, Mr, 395
 Israel, 381, 418, 440, 451, 664
 Istituto Nazionale per il Commercio Estero, 342
 Italian Constitution, 333
 Italian language, 357
 Italo-Maltese plan, 329, 456
 Italo-Maltese relations, 330, 348, 350, 362, 366
 Italy, 19, 29, 90, 94, 146, 167, 191, 251, 280, 282, 317, 322, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 336, 337, 338, 339, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 362, 363, 365, 366, 370, 381, 431, 432, 455, 456, 457, 508, 518, 540, 612, 614, 655, 665
 Italy-Malta car ferry service, 360
Izvestiya, 85
 Jacobson, M., 259
 Jackling, Mr, 662
 Jagan, Cheddi, 186, 304
 Jamaica, 121, 304, 562, 574
 James II, 266
 Japanese, 237, 657
 Japanese War, 237
 Jarret, Sir C., 154
 Jenkins, T. M., 368, 369, 395, 396, 549, 550, 551, 563, 586, 651, 654
 Jersey, 386
 John XXIII, 276, 567
 Johnson, Lyndon, 212, 444
 Joint Consultative Council, 16, 47, 191, 319, 409, 466, 476, 480, 485
 Joint Planning Committee, 506
 Joint Planning Staff, 511, 512, 514
 Joint Study Group, 74, 90, 105, 131, 147, 154, 371, 375, 396, 504, 505, 508, 627
 Jones, Commander E., 226, 338, 674, 676, 682
 Jordan, 381, 519, 520, 530, 531, 532
 Judicial Service Commission, 60
 Judiciary, 47, 58, 110, 115
 Kalafrana, 381, 515, 585, 586, 587
 Kalkara, 522, 682
 Kampala, 653
 Karachi, 653
 Karume, A., 603, 604
 Kay, H., 222
 Keatley, P., 85, 86
 Kennedy, J. F., 123, 124, 160, 293, 294, 300, 301, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 313, 316, 317, 322, 325, 457, 567
 Kenya, 121, 180, 181, 208, 226, 574
 Khrushchev, N., 123, 160, 212, 329, 439, 441, 467
 Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 327
 Kingzett, Brigadier B., 477
 Kirkness, D. J., 154
 Kisch, J. M., 59, 97, 101, 104, 116, 145, 154, 156, 179, 274, 283, 284, 285, 286, 295, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 306, 310, 315, 331, 350, 365, 398, 500, 503, 510, 535, 536, 537, 548, 551, 556, 563, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 609, 610, 617, 647, 660, 661, 662, 674
 Knighton, J. M., 154, 156
 Lapsley, Air Vice-Marshall J. H., 492
 Labour Brigade (*Brigata Laburista*), 48, 49, 200, 670
 Labour League of Youth (LLY), 452, 470, 471, 670
 Labour Party split, 333
 Lady Wakefield, 315
 Lagos, 653
 Lambeth Palace, 582

- Lansdowne, Lord, 14, 132, 154, 156,
178, 184, 190, 209, 215, 233, 253,
271, 289, 305, 306, 395, 466, 538,
539, 572, 573, 578, 579, 604, 631,
635, 674
- Laskey, D. S., 362, 364, 370
- Lawrence, D. H., 125, 390
- Laycock, Sir R., 36, 41, 68, 76, 155,
448, 663
- Le Mie Vicende*, 22
- Lebanon, 396, 519, 520, 530, 531, 532
- Ledwidge, W. B. J., 285, 286, 290, 369,
370
- Lee, K. Y., 402
- Lehen is-Sewwa, Il-*, 97, 157, 170, 228,
245
- Lennox-Boyd, Hon. A., 37, 68, 69, 70,
71, 76, 154, 158
- Lenten Pastoral, 36
- Levin, B., 124
- Lewis, H., 16, 318, 659
- Liberalism, 20
- Libya, 92, 162, 322, 408, 413, 445,
451, 477, 492, 507, 509, 512, 513,
514, 517, 518, 519, 520, 523, 524,
525, 526, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532,
533, 539, 540, 542, 543, 548, 552,
585, 609, 625, 626, 664, 678
- Liebich, Dr F. K., 585
- Lindsay Fynn, B., 663
- Lisbon, 617, 664
- Litchfield, Hon. Capt., 206
- Lithuania, 280
- Liu Chieh, Ambassador, 662
- Lloyd George, 597
- Local councils, 166
- Local Intelligence Committee (Malta),
178, 185, 242, 431
- Lockheed, 313
- Luce, Sir D., 552, 553
- Lugard, Lord, 124
- Luke, Sir H., 155
- Lungaro Mifsud, J., 397
- Luqa airfield, 45, 96, 192, 320, 322,
323, 467, 474, 511, 513, 517, 521,
552, 585, 626, 690
- Macleod, Hon. I., 14, 50, 71, 121
- Macmillan, Hon. H., 14, 121, 123, 124,
129, 140, 316, 317, 356
- Macotta, G. W., 350
- Mactes textile machinery, 360
- Madrid, 26, 443
- Mafia, 329
- Makarios, Archbishop, 64, 90, 121,
238, 402, 419, 420, 526, 527
- Malawi, 121, 436, 574, 654
- Malaya, 120, 226, 403, 501
- Malta Bankers Association, 359
- Malta Civil Service Association, 132
- Malta Dockyard (Temporary Provision)
Act, 427
- Malta Independence Bill, 183, 193,
231, 265, 266, 559, 560, 565, 567,
584, 608, 621, 622, 623, 633, 639,
662, 668
- Malta Independence Conference, 128,
149, 151, 153, 156, 159, 163, 176,
198, 264, 271, 280, 288, 293, 300,
435
- Malta Labour Party (MLP), 15, 29, 36,
37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 49, 44, 55, 56,
57, 92, 96, 105, 119, 128, 135,
138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 148, 151,
156, 157, 163, 164, 165, 166, 168,
169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 178, 180,
182, 183, 185, 187, 198, 200, 201,
202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 208, 212,
216, 222, 227, 230, 231, 232, 236,
239, 243, 244, 250, 251, 252, 255,
257, 258, 263, 274, 276, 281, 299,
296, 313, 319, 329, 330, 333, 334,
336, 338, 344, 345, 347, 350, 351,
352, 353, 354, 365, 366, 368, 406,
407, 411, 413, 416, 418, 419, 420,
422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428,
429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435,
436, 437, 438, 439, 441, 443, 444,
445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 451, 452,
453, 454, 456, 457, 458, 461, 462,
463, 464, 465, 466, 468, 469, 470,
471, 472, 474, 475, 486, 487, 491,
545, 549, 560, 561, 564, 606, 629,

- 653, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671,
672, 673, 674, 677, 678, 679, 680,
682
- Malta Licensing Authority, 146
- Malta News*, 421, 448, 461, 473, 475,
476, 678, 684
- Malta Tag?na*, 57, 228
- Malta Technical and Clerical
Association (MTCA), 426, 679
- Malta Territorial Forces (Territorials),
110, 468, 479, 480, 497
- Malta Trade Fair, 342, 668
- Malta Union of Teachers, 132
- Maltese-Americans, 294
- Maltese-Canadians, 395
- Mamo, W., 136
- Mangion, S. J., 536
- Mannix, Archbishop D., 236, 237,
239
- Manufacturers Hanover Trust
Company, 305
- Mao Tse-tung, 657
- Maoris, 389
- Marfa, 322, 323, 383
- Marlborough House, 150, 153, 154,
160, 166, 174, 264, 265, 273, 461
- Marsalforn Hotel, 384
- Marsaxlokk, 585
- Marseilles, 585
- Marshall Aid, 296
- Marsovin winery, 380, 385, 422
- Martin, Sir J., 59, 61, 72, 76, 104, 114,
154, 156, 178, 338, 396, 417, 477,
481, 483, 484, 485, 486, 492, 496,
497, 498, 500, 503, 505, 506, 507,
508, 512, 513, 523, 528, 529, 537,
538, 539, 540, 547, 548, 549, 577,
622, 651, 664
- Martinez, Senor R., 442
- Masterton, Admiral, 541
- Mattei, Commander J. B., 378
- Mattei, Enrico, 365
- Maudling, Hon. R., 14, 55, 59, 60, 86,
103, 121
- Mauritius, 303, 358
- May Day, 40, 255, 418
- Mc Kinley, Air Vice Marshall D. C., 477
- McCurran-Walter Act, 297, 389
- McNamara, R., 323
- McPetrie, J. C., 154, 156
- Medici, G., 359
- Mediterranean Fleet, 125, 295
- Mediterranean region, 3, 14, 15, 17,
19, 26, 38, 62, 90, 92, 93, 116,
125, 127, 134, 140, 149, 157, 159,
160, 162, 179, 202, 203, 216, 295,
296, 302, 308, 313, 317, 318, 319,
320, 322, 337, 338, 355, 358, 368,
381, 387, 389, 392, 395, 400, 402,
403, 408, 413, 439, 440, 442, 445,
447, 455, 485, 490, 493, 496, 505,
507, 513, 514, 516, 517, 518, 519,
520, 522, 523, 527, 528, 529, 530,
531, 532, 533, 534, 540, 542, 545,
549, 554, 592, 593, 599, 601, 603,
611, 614, 617, 638, 655, 658, 663,
664, 665
- Meir, Golda, 445, 451
- Melbourne, 23, 43, 236, 641
- Mellieha Bay, 386
- Melville, Hon. E., 465
- Mercieca, Sir A., 22, 51, 53, 355, 356
- Messina, Dr O., 16, 140, 319, 336, 337,
339, 348, 349, 350
- Metropole Hotel, 384
- Metwally, Prof. M. M., 389
- Mexico, 283
- Mgarr, 384
- Micallef, Dr D., 49, 156, 196, 248
- Micallef Stafrace, Dr J., 45, 56
- Michelet, J., 20
- Middle East, 17, 337, 514, 519, 520,
525, 531, 533, 542, 599
- Midland Hotel, 384
- Mifsud, Sir U., 136, 397
- Mifsud Bonnici, Dr U., 225
- Milan, 342, 351, 360
- Milbourne, Sir E., 154, 590
- Miller, J. D., 398
- Milner, Lord, 124
- Ministry for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs, 655

- Minogue, M. M., 547
 Mintoﬀ, Hon. D., 8, 15, 21, 29, 30, 32, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 54, 56, 60, 69, 71, 73, 84, 85, 87, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 101, 104, 105, 113, 114, 119, 127, 128, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 153, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166, 172, 177, 178, 180, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 194, 195, 197, 198, 199, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 211, 212, 215, 216, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 230, 231, 232, 237, 242, 243, 244, 245, 252, 253, 254, 257, 260, 263, 264, 265, 268, 269, 274, 280, 290, 293, 295, 296, 297, 298, 301, 302, 303, 309, 313, 314, 323, 324, 329, 330, 333, 334, 336, 337, 345, 346, 347, 348, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 391, 403, 404, 406, 408, 409, 413, 416, 418, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 427, 428, 429, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 455, 456, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 475, 486, 489, 490, 498, 501, 539, 549, 552, 553, 554, 555, 561, 566, 571, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 611, 620, 634, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 671, 672, 675, 678, 679, 682, 688
 Mintoﬀ, Fr D., 183
 Mintoﬀ, Mrs M., 451
 Mixed marriage, 575
 Mizzi, Hon. Dr E., 22, 168
 Mizzi, Dr E., 22, 619
 Mizzi, Dr F., 19, 78, 226, 641
 Mizzi, J. A., 24
 Mizzi, Magistrate F., 226
 Monaco, 381
 Montini, Cardinal, 276
 Moran, Hon. Dr V., 438, 439, 440, 444, 446
 Morgan, J. C., 555, 556, 603, 604, 606, 607
 Morocco, 381, 654
 Morris, J., 125, 126
 Mortal sin, 45, 164, 240, 434
 Moscow, 85, 94, 180, 365, 413, 433, 439, 440, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 561
 Mottershead, F. W., 154, 179
 Moule, P., 470
 Mountbatten, Earl, 14, 15, 154, 317, 492, 493, 496, 498, 504, 506, 507, 510, 511, 513, 514, 515, 523, 539, 540, 542, 548, 552, 554, 599
Moviment Azzjoni Soċjali (MAS), 157, 426
 MTV, 50, 52, 117, 251
 Muench, Cardinal, 36
 Muhsin, A., 211
 Muir, J. R. (Report), 425, 505
 Mullarky, J. P., 305, 306
 Murder plot, 672, 676, 677, 678
 Muscat, Hon. Dr Ph., 425, 634, 668
 Mussolini, B., 357, 640
 Nairobi, 653
 Naples, 29, 364, 370, 540, 541, 601, 611
 Napoleonic era, 503
 Nassau, 316, 318
 Nasser, G. A., 38, 39, 121, 329, 354, 409, 424, 439, 449, 450, 451, 452, 469, 470, 525, 637
 National Association of Clerical and Supervisory Grades (NACSS), 419
 National Bank of Malta, 383
 National Day, 21
 National flag, 152, 166
 Nationalism, 20, 78, 237, 238, 327, 333, 403, 527, 566, 655
 NATO Mediterranean Naval Command, 664
 Naudi, P. J., 52, 231, 567
 Naval Base, 74, 86
 Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI), 110

- Naxxar, 44, 431, 447, 678
 Near East, 419, 521
 Neguib, M., 470
 Nehru, J., 120
 Nenni, P., 328, 329, 330, 334, 335,
 352, 354, 456
 Nervi, Prof., 358
 Neutralism, 108, 114, 211, 323, 366,
 368, 413, 418, 434, 446, 455, 525
 Neutrality, 92, 140, 329, 354, 433, 436,
 606
 New Caledonia, 237
New Statesman, The, 93, 94, 265, 438
 New York, 120, 123, 140, 294, 299,
 305, 311, 315, 365, 425, 441, 524,
 593, 654, 655, 662
 New Zealand, 147, 310, 389, 390, 392,
 393
 Nicaragua, 283
 Nicosia, 420, 526, 527, 653
 Nigeria, 120, 121, 226, 403, 499, 574
 Nixon, R., 657
 Nkrumah, K., 123, 211
 Noakes, P. R., 154
 Non-alignment, 92
 Non-discrimination clause, 289, 564,
 574, 577, 578, 579, 632
 Normans, 355
 North Atlantic Council, 601, 611, 616,
 617, 618, 619
 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
 (NATO), 19, 24, 90, 92, 108, 110,
 112, 113, 114, 118, 140, 142, 146,
 147, 159, 180, 194, 286, 296, 308,
 309, 313, 316, 317, 322, 325, 326,
 329, 354, 362, 363, 364, 369, 408,
 434, 436, 438, 456, 500, 501, 502,
 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 522,
 540, 584, 591, 600, 601, 609, 610,
 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617,
 618, 619, 663, 664, 665
 North Borneo, 121, 461
Northern Daily, The, 90
 Norway, 322, 614
 Notabile, 659
 Nuclear deterrent, 123, 316, 317, 596
 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, 123, 180
 Nuclear weapons, 591, 592, 595
 Nuovo San Giorgio, 360
 Nyasaland, 96, 121, 180, 181, 436
 Nyerere, Sir J., 38, 121, 604

Observer, The, 93, 600
 Ontario, 393
 Opening of Parliament, 670, 677, 682
 Operation Cartwheel, 505, 521
 Operation Competent, 489
 Operation Lear, 505, 521
 Order of St John, 26, 28, 269, 443
 Order of St Raimond de Penafort, 239,
 442
Orizzonti, L-, 105, 177, 228, 242, 243,
 244, 294, 313, 410, 416, 418, 419,
 424, 425
 Ormsby-Gore, Sir D., 305
 Orsini, Donna Isabella, 271
 Ortona, Dott. E., 342
 Oslo, 617, 664
 Ottawa, 393, 617, 653, 664
Otto Settembre, 29, 305, 640, 641
 Ottoman Empire, 28, 640
 Oversea Policy Committee, 100, 101,
 285, 528, 545, 547, 550, 551, 552,
 599
 Oxford, 19, 23, 40, 124, 403, 437

 Pakistan, 53
 Palermo, 26
 Palestine, 300, 303
 Pan American, 311
 Pan-Arabism, 525
 Pace, P., 197, 680
 Paradise Bay Hotel, 383
 Pardo, Dr A., 313, 655
 Paris, Hon. Dr A., 55, 342, 354, 355,
 356, 357, 359, 367, 638
 Parish priests, 178, 238, 404, 410, 447
Partit Nazzjonalista (PN), 15, 21, 30, 32,
 35, 36, 40, 45, 55, 57, 58, 73, 83,
 96, 97, 104, 116, 134, 135, 136,
 137, 148, 150, 151, 156, 157, 158,
 163, 165, 168, 173, 174, 182, 184,

- 187, 196, 197, 201, 211, 216, 218,
223, 228, 229, 230, 231, 235, 237,
244, 248, 253, 254, 255, 258, 259,
268, 269, 273, 290, 323, 338, 342,
344, 356, 357, 359, 416, 421, 432,
434, 436, 443, 459, 464, 465, 545,
549, 630, 631, 639, 660, 661, 664,
666, 668
- Pottle, P., 470
- Paul VI, 177, 276, 277, 278, 279, 582
- Peking, 38, 365, 660, 661
- Pellegrini, Hon. T., 15, 49, 104, 127,
135, 136, 151, 153, 156, 157, 158,
160, 161, 186, 188, 195, 196, 205,
206, 215, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232,
242, 243, 244, 245, 254, 255, 368,
466, 561, 611, 639
- People's Republic of South Yemen, 121
- Persian Gulf, 525
- Perth, Lord, 14, 59, 71, 112, 113, 118,
154, 634, 635
- Peru, 283
- Phoenicia Hotel, 381, 384, 684
- Pickersgill, Mr, 395
- Pigot, Major General H., 28
- Pirelli rubber factory, 360
- Plevna Hotel, 384
- Podesta', W., 359
- Polaris, 123, 140, 145, 146, 294, 295,
313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319,
320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 456,
517, 522, 591, 592, 593, 594
- Poles, 469
- Police Force (Malta), 16, 21, 37, 41, 47,
52, 55, 58, 59, 60, 110, 170, 222,
223, 241, 334, 410, 411, 421, 462,
466, 467, 468, 472, 473, 474, 476,
477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483,
484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 491, 492,
512, 562, 604, 667, 671, 672, 674,
675, 676, 679, 680, 682, 684
- Police Commissioner, 41, 222, 474,
482, 484, 485, 667
- Pollacco, J., 358, 378, 649
- Polynesian problem, 392
- Poplu, Il-*, 97, 157, 228, 649
- Port Auxiliary Service, 428
- Port of Spain, 653
- Portelli, John, 208
- Portelli, Joseph, 359, 360
- Portelli, P., 208
- Porter, B., 120
- Portugal, 93, 282, 614
- Pottle, P., 470
- Poynton, Sir H., 53, 102, 154, 646,
647, 653, 671, 674, 675, 677, 678,
682
- Preluna Hotel, 384, 451
- Preti, M., 354
- Privilegium fori*, 170, 171, 172, 223, 280
- Privy Council, 60, 204, 272, 575, 576
- Progress Press, 23, 97, 151, 157, 161
- Progressive Constitutional Party (PCP),
15, 127, 136, 156, 157, 167, 228
- Protestant denominations, 164, 218,
230, 566, 571
- Protestantism, 266
- Prussia, 280
- Public Meetings Ordinance, 36, 222
- Public morality, 201, 223, 568
- Public order, 170, 199, 201, 223, 409,
420, 568
- Public Record Office, 23, 219
- Public Service Commission, 47, 58, 59,
60, 110, 115, 156
- Pugliese, Admiral, 540
- Pullicino. Dr G., 225
- Qawmien, il-*, 157
- Qrendi, 322, 682
- Quadragesimo Anno*, 165
- Québec, 658
- R.A.F. Regiment Strategic Reserve, 521
- R.N. Hospital in Bighi, 428
- Rageh, Assad, 455
- Ragonesi, Dr V., 21, 24, 31, 61, 68, 71,
72, 73, 74, 156, 192, 197, 262,
263, 275, 276, 378, 402, 535, 567,
598, 624, 649, 653, 663
- Rahman, T. A., 120
- Raikes, Sir V., 383

- Rajt Malta Tmibdel*, 22, 205, 685
 Ramage, Sir R., 226
 Ramgoolam, Dr, 303
 Ramsey, Dr M., 581, 582, 584, 651
 Rediffusion, 41, 51, 52, 141, 151, 164,
 196, 242, 424, 467, 476
 Rediffusion House, 476, 541
 Refalo, Magistrate G. O., 226
 Referendum, 117, 135, 136, 137, 138,
 157, 164, 173, 174, 183, 184, 185,
 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 193, 197,
 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 211,
 212, 213, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220,
 221, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229,
 230, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237,
 239, 240, 241, 243, 244, 245, 246,
 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254,
 255, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263,
 264, 268, 270, 271, 283, 284, 285,
 290, 302, 329, 368, 406, 407, 421,
 424, 446, 452, 494, 495, 539, 543,
 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 559,
 560, 561, 599, 628, 629, 630, 632,
 633, 634, 635, 643, 666
 Referendum Act, 226, 255
 Reformation, 266, 653
 Religious teaching in schools, 201, 223
 Remondino, General, 540
 Representation of the People Act, 168,
 202, 266
 Resolution of the Maltese People, 287
Review, Ir-, 46, 228
 Rhodes, Sir C., 23, 124
 Rhodesia, 96, 121, 180
 Rimini, 331, 351
 Rinella Radio Station, 600
Risorgimento, 20, 327
 Roberts, Sir A., 46
 Robinson, R. E., 18
 Robinson, Sir P., 154
 Rockefeller, L., 306
 Roman Catholic Church, 15, 26, 29,
 38, 39, 42, 44, 64, 95, 137, 138,
 141, 157, 169, 172, 173, 184, 188,
 201, 202, 203, 207, 221, 222, 224,
 227, 228, 233, 234, 235, 236, 238,
 248, 253, 260, 261, 262, 263, 265,
 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272,
 273, 275, 276, 280, 281, 282, 283,
 284, 285, 287, 288, 289, 301, 302,
 303, 337, 345, 364, 366, 367, 368,
 369, 408, 432, 552, 560, 564, 567,
 569, 570, 571, 575, 576, 582, 583,
 605, 630, 631, 632, 665, 667
 Rome, 26, 59, 75, 76, 117, 123, 172,
 177, 183, 188, 198, 222, 270, 271,
 276, 278, 280, 286, 287, 327, 330,
 336, 338, 339, 342, 345, 347, 350,
 351, 352, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358,
 359, 360, 362, 363, 365, 369, 396,
 413, 432, 439, 441, 449, 452, 456,
 466, 536, 540, 542, 614, 617, 664
 Roncali, Dr Z., 641
 Rose, C. M., 324, 325, 326
 Rossi, General, 540
 Rossignaud, J., 397, 398, 536
 Rota, 317
 Rothwell, B., 314, 315, 326
 Roumania, 280
 Royal Air Force (RAF), 14, 317, 465,
 477, 478, 485, 488, 497, 512, 515,
 519, 521, 528, 531, 600, 607, 626,
 690
 Royal Lady Hotel, 384
 Royal Malta Artillery (RMA), 18, 110,
 453, 466, 467, 478, 479, 480, 484,
 488, 497
 Royal Navy (RN), 14, 28, 78, 110, 125,
 136, 308, 313, 326, 384, 403, 488,
 497, 509, 512, 515, 518, 522, 533,
 540, 543, 591, 601, 607, 665
 Royal Opera House, 18, 72, 73, 146,
 610, 621
 Royal Sussex Regiment, 428, 478
 Royal University of Malta, 204, 348,
 354, 684
 Royes, Mgr, 355
 Ruffner, B. W., 319, 320
 Ruggero di Lauria, 355
 'Rule Britannia', 125
 Rundown, 16, 67, 73, 74, 77, 84, 88,
 99, 105, 111, 119, 129, 131, 138,

- 139, 140, 146, 167, 350, 362, 372,
413, 418, 425, 428, 505, 507, 508,
509, 510, 511, 522, 585, 589, 605,
607, 621, 632
- Rushford, A. R., 154, 537
- Rusk, D., 293, 304, 306, 307, 309, 310,
326, 618, 619
- Russell, Admiral, 541
- Russell, Bertrand, 470
- Salomone, A., 61, 66, 226, 309, 378,
536, 623
- Salomone Reynaud, Magistrate J., 226
- Samoa, 392
- Sampson, N., 527
- San Donato, 351, 360
- San Marino, 282, 330, 331, 332, 344,
351, 366, 381, 456
- Sandys, Hon. D., 14, 61, 67, 68, 70, 71,
72, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85,
86, 94, 97, 101, 102, 103, 104,
106, 109, 118, 120, 121, 123, 127,
128, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 136,
137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143,
144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150,
151, 153, 154, 156, 157, 158, 160,
162, 167, 174, 177, 183, 184, 186,
187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 194,
195, 198, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210,
211, 212, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218,
221, 225, 226, 229, 230, 231, 233,
234, 235, 239, 243, 244, 245, 248,
250, 251, 252, 253, 258, 259, 260,
261, 262, 265, 266, 267, 270, 271,
274, 275, 284, 285, 286, 288, 289,
299, 302, 305, 313, 314, 321, 322,
324, 339, 367, 368, 390, 392, 393,
395, 396, 427, 429, 434, 435, 445,
460, 461, 462, 463, 472, 496, 499,
506, 512, 526, 535, 538, 539, 547,
549, 550, 551, 561, 563, 566, 567,
571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 577, 578,
580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 590, 591,
598, 599, 600, 611, 612, 621, 622,
623, 626, 628, 630, 631, 632, 633,
639, 642, 646, 647, 649, 651, 653,
654, 667, 671, 672, 674, 675, 676,
682, 684, 688
- Sandys, Mrs D., 130, 220
- Sant, Hon. Dr. A., 39
- Sant, Hon. L., 56, 364, 413, 424, 425,
426, 452, 453
- Sant, S., 455
- Santamaria, B. A., 237
- Saracens, 25
- Sarawak, 121, 461
- Sardinia, 336
- Savoy Hotel, 36, 82, 83, 89, 559, 567, 653
- Scarlett, Sir P., 59, 278, 280, 282, 286,
287, 288
- Scerri, A., 444
- Scerri, J., 431
- Scerri, Dr V., 225
- Schembri, Magistrate C., 226
- Schreiber, Sir E., 663
- Schuster, Sir G., 65, 373, 441, 442
- Schwarz, M., 306, 310
- Scicluna, Dr C., 156
- Scotland, 181, 182, 317, 673, 674, 676
- Scotland Yard, 673, 674, 676
- Scotsman, The*, 83, 88, 89, 181
- Sea Cliff Hotel, 383
- Second World War, 29, 73, 130, 237,
239, 322, 524, 567, 610, 657
- Security Council (UN), 468, 654, 657,
662, 663
- Seers, D., 65, 373
- Selmun Palace Hotel, 384
- Selwyn, P., 154, 633
- Selwyn Lloyd, 633
- September 21st (1964), 21, 46, 104,
637, 643, 646, 647, 648, 649, 653,
666, 670, 686, 688
- Services (British), 14, 16, 24, 47, 53,
60, 62, 65, 66, 77, 110, 113, 114,
115, 119, 138, 139, 140, 149, 205,
226, 240, 259, 262, 305, 323, 337,
364, 371, 380, 381, 425, 428, 435,
437, 447, 467, 481, 483, 484, 486,
487, 493, 495, 496, 497, 498, 502,
503, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510,
511, 540, 569, 589, 600, 605, 621

- Sette Giugno*, 29
 Shand, T., 392
 Shaw (High Storrs) Ltd., 386
 Sheffield, 386
 Shell Oil Company, 346
 Shuckburgh, Sir E., 611, 612, 614, 615, 616
 Sicily, 298, 332, 336, 343, 345, 355, 366, 508
 Sierra Leone, 115, 121, 499, 574
 Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), 320, 518, 520
 Singapore, 50, 53, 94, 121, 332, 354, 400, 402, 595, 597
 Siracusa, 363, 369
Sitt punti, 38, 39, 43, 172, 199, 225, 228, 231, 251, 252, 271, 637, 665
 Sixth Fleet (US), 295, 314, 320, 326
 Skybolt missile, 123, 316
 Slack, Rev., 582
 Sliema, 55, 125, 256, 376, 381, 383, 384, 451
 Smith, B. G., 169
 Socialism, 38, 54, 163, 173, 249, 352, 353, 526
 Socialist Party (Israeli), 451
 Socialist Party (Italian), 334, 451
 Solemar Hotel, 383
 Soler, Magistrate J., 226
 Solesby, Miss T. A., 343, 344
 Somalia, 333
 Somaliland, 121
 Sorensen, Hon. Mr., 206
 South Africa, 121, 389
 South East Asia, 53, 400
 South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), 501
 Sovereignty, 101, 108, 109, 143, 144, 157, 159, 181, 254, 273, 471, 472, 496, 502, 512, 563, 592, 593, 658, 659, 684, 686
 Soviet embassy in London, 197, 435, 441, 444
 Soviet embassy in Washington, 441
 Soviet Union (USSR), 85, 92, 95, 160, 197, 228, 316, 334, 335, 432, 435, 436, 441, 444, 445, 446, 447, 452, 455, 475, 516, 561, 593, 606
 Spain, 123, 281, 282, 317, 381, 395, 442, 443, 444, 581, 614, 653
 Spanish Civil War, 444
 Special Branch, 492, 672, 674, 676
 Speech from the Throne, 185, 429, 671
 Spiteri, E. J., 389
 Spiteri, Dr J., 55, 381
 Spiteri, Not. Joseph, 55, 638, 649
 Spiteri, Lino, 24, 45, 381
 Spiteri Mallia, A., 359, 360
 St Andrew's, 438, 515
 St George's Bay, 383, 515
 St George's Day, 641, 642
 St J. Chadwick, G., 156
 St James Cavalier, 27
 St John's Co-Cathedral, 164, 222, 224, 250, 269, 354, 636, 653
 St John's Square, 250
 St Joseph the Worker, 255
 St Julian's, 295, 376, 383
 St Luke's Hospital, 410
 St Paul, 36, 355, 442, 443, 641, 689
 St Paul's Bay, 461
 Staines, E., 52
 Stephens, F. J., 178, 179, 325, 417, 502, 506, 527
 Stolper, Dr W., 16, 65, 90, 105, 146, 147, 311, 336, 371, 372, 380, 389, 396, 401, 402, 504, 511, 627
 Stonehouse, Hon. M., 206
 Storchi, Dott., 342
Storja, 20, 238, 649
 Stourton, Sir I., 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 682
 Strachey, J., 154
 Strasbourg, 368, 655, 658
 Strickland, Hon. Miss M., 15, 54, 56, 97, 104, 127, 136, 137, 151, 153, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 168, 169, 173, 186, 195, 196, 205, 206, 208, 209, 228, 229, 232, 255, 271, 272, 273, 280, 357, 381, 421, 459, 465, 605, 611

- Strickland, Sir G., 168, 272, 357
 Strikes, 92, 104, 105, 245, 419, 425,
 426, 428, 430, 444, 459, 477, 478,
 488, 492, 509, 553, 601, 668
Struggle, The, 36, 452
 Sudan, 120
 Suez, 29, 39, 120, 121, 161, 162, 470,
 492, 529
 Suez Canal, 120, 121, 470, 529
 Suleiman the Magnificent, 640
Sunday Citizen, The, 267
Sunday Telegraph, The, 93, 212
Sunday Times of Malta, The, 20, 39, 161,
 333, 350, 602, 684
 Superintending Armament Supply
 Officer (SASO), 423
 Supreme Allied Command Europe
 (SACEUR), 465, 508, 601
 Supreme Soviet, 446
 Suttling, Supt., 672, 674, 675, 676, 678
 Swan, Hunter and Wigham
 Richardson, 147, 309, 426, 427,
 588, 590
 Swedes, 355
 Syria, 514

 Ta' Qali airfield, 515
 Ta' Xbiex, 386
 Tabone, E. C., 52, 679
 Tabone, Dr V., 156, 196
 Tacitus, 128
 Tagus, 94
 Taiwan, 657
 Tanganyika, 121, 160, 351, 352, 431,
 603, 604
 Tanzania, 121, 604
 Tapestry Chamber, 684
 Targa Gap, 411, 414, 567
Tarka, It-, 57, 228, 244
 Tarragona, 442
 Taylor, P. L., 674
 Teeling, Sir W., 154, 633
 Terni, 360
 Territorials, 110, 468, 479, 480, 497
 Texas, 386
The Arabian Nights, 128

The Great Siege, 306, 308
 The Hague, 664
Times, The, 55, 89, 93, 150, 242, 311,
 317, 359, 442, 460, 549, 662
 Thomson, G., 215
 Thorne, E., 305
 Thorneycroft, Hon. P., 14, 154, 539,
 543, 544, 545, 547, 548, 550, 551,
 591, 597, 599, 600
 Thurlow, Lord, 507, 509, 510, 636
 Tigne', 384
Times of Malta, The, 37, 41, 59, 105,
 161, 215, 225, 228, 235, 236, 239,
 242, 255, 294, 317, 410, 429, 442,
 448, 449, 451, 460, 467, 523, 549
 Tito, 38
 Tonna, E. S., 412
 Tonna, Fr B., 250, 269, 270
 Tonna, Supt. F., , 269, 270, 682
Torca, It-, 96, 561
 Toronto, 393
 Torpedo Proving Plant near Hal Far,
 447
 Tourism, 18, 55, 62, 67, 73, 146, 147,
 183, 306, 339, 358, 360, 362, 363,
 364, 365, 371, 381, 383, 386, 405,
 453
 Tourist Board, 358, 378, 384, 386, 387
 Trafford Smith, 154
 Transport House, 155, 215
 Treasury, 95, 101, 102, 103, 146, 154,
 179, 397, 407, 502, 552, 560, 599,
 600, 609, 620, 621, 625, 626, 627
 Treaty of Amiens, 269, 328
 Treaty of Rome, 75, 76, 123
 Trend, Sir B., 545, 547
Tribune, The, 438
 Trieste, 585
 Trinidad and Tobago, 121, 562, 574
 Tripoli, 525, 528
 Tropospheric scatter station, 146, 295,
 301, 320, 321, 322, 326, 456, 517
 TSR2, 316, 532
 Tunisia, 92, 333, 381
 Turin, 351, 360
 TUXEDO stockpile, 531, 626

- Tweedsmuir, Lord, 180, 181
 Tyler, W., 306, 618
 Uganda, 121, 328, 355, 574
 UK Commissioner, 15, 16, 47, 50, 53,
 61, 102, 134, 233, 274, 294, 299,
 319, 320, 336, 337, 338, 477, 483,
 485, 536, 537, 659, 660, 672
 UK Government Employees Section
 (GWU), 423
 Ulster Unionists, 266
 Ulster Volunteer force, 236
 Unemployment, 54, 62, 84, 86, 88, 93,
 95, 122, 139, 159, 362, 397, 409,
 413, 431, 434, 504, 505, 507, 508,
 509, 511, 513, 607
 United Arab Republic, 470
 United Nations (UN), 16, 65, 105, 108,
 138, 139, 141, 146, 160, 178, 180,
 198, 213, 252, 273, 293, 299, 300,
 305, 311, 313, 352, 358, 383, 398,
 406, 407, 425, 434, 435, 436, 441,
 451, 461, 463, 510, 511, 561, 585,
 609, 612, 629, 630, 631, 639, 653,
 654, 655, 657, 663, 664
 United Nations Educational, Scientific
 and Cultural Organisation
 (UNESCO), 663
 UN Conference on Travel and
 Tourism, 358
 UN General Assembly, 654
 United States of America (USA), 8, 16,
 19, 23, 24, 39, 90, 92, 123, 124,
 135, 141, 146, 162, 167, 172, 181,
 183, 191, 244, 271, 293, 293, 294,
 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301,
 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 309,
 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316,
 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 324,
 325, 326, 327, 346, 383, 388 398,
 393, 397, 398, 399, 403, 416, 441,
 443, 444, 445, 447, 448, 451, 456,
 457, 517, 519, 520, 522, 524, 525,
 526, 528, 532, 545, 591, 592, 593,
 595, 597, 598, 601, 610, 614, 616,
 617, 639, 657, 658, 659, 660
 United States Navy, 326
 University of Malta, 18, 20, 23, 204,
 348, 354, 390, 684
 Untours Ltd, 421
 Uruguay, 283
 US Air Force (USAF), 320, 321
 US Naval Air Squadron, 296
 U Thant, 212, 293, 299, 305, 311, 467
 Validation of laws, 168, 563
 Valletta, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 37, 46, 48,
 56, 57, 65, 66, 73, 83, 93, 94, 96,
 105, 106, 117, 125, 130, 150, 151,
 160, 164, 169, 172, 173, 177, 221,
 222, 224, 256, 270, 287, 313, 323,
 324, 325, 330, 333, 334, 354, 369,
 378, 381, 383, 384, 390, 395, 398,
 399, 400, 404, 411, 422, 465, 473,
 476, 487, 491, 566, 602, 641, 655,
 661, 664, 668, 677, 682, 683
 Vassallo, Dr G., 225
 Vassallo, J. P., 536
 Vatican Council, 275
 Vella, L., 359, 360
 Venezuela, 283
Vespri Siciliani, 355
 Vico, G. B., 20
 Victoria, Gozo, 383
 Victoria Falls Conference, 180
 Vienna, 352, 353, 432
 Villa Portelli, 522
 Violence, 39, 41, 87, 164, 172, 216,
 262, 410, 433, 438, 448, 449, 461,
 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 468, 469,
 472, 477, 478, 483, 486, 494, 666,
 672
 Virgin Islands, 306
 Visiting Forces Act, 609
 Vitsadha village, 527
Voice of Malta, The, 42, 351, 420, 423,
 458
 Wagner, R. F., 305
 Wakefield, Sir E., 15, 16, 53, 61, 75,
 97, 98, 102, 104, 105, 113, 135,
 137, 138, 139, 145, 154, 156, 195,

- 197, 225, 226, 232, 233, 234, 252,
253, 274, 275, 294, 295, 299, 301,
309, 315, 316, 319, 320, 321, 322,
336, 337, 338, 345, 348, 349, 351,
352, 353, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360,
361, 362, 366, 390, 396, 477, 480,
502, 503, 512, 534, 535, 536, 537,
548, 563, 573, 578, 580, 581, 610,
616, 647, 649, 659, 660, 662, 667,
671, 672, 674, 675, 677
- Waldorf-Towers Hotel, 315
- Wales, 226
- Wall, Hon. Maj. P., 51, 66, 96, 123,
154, 195, 206, 252, 378, 632
- War Damage, 73, 296, 496
- Ward, Sir J., 338, 339, 345, 348, 351,
352, 353, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360,
361, 362, 364, 365, 366, 367, 395
- Wars of the Roses, 20
- Washington, 294, 295, 299, 300, 301,
305, 306, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314,
317, 318, 319, 324, 325, 327, 365,
398, 441, 525, 614, 617, 619, 654,
664
- Washington, G., 181
- Watt, I., 179, 274, 349, 350, 438, 502,
503, 537, 588, 617, 662
- Wellington, 392, 653
- Wen, Dr, 661, 662
- West, E., 59
- West Germany, 94, 352, 432, 614
- Western Europe, 113, 115, 180, 201,
308, 323, 328, 503, 504, 602, 610,
619
- What Mintoff Wants*, 429
- Wheelus Air Base (Libya), 162, 525,
528
- Whistler, A. M. W., 507
- Williams, Hon. Mr, 229
- Wilson, Hon. H., 14, 203, 215, 230,
248, 266, 335, 436, 437, 444, 445,
623, 663
- 'Winds of Change' speech, 123
- Windsor, Univ. of, 393
- Wirth, A., 359, 360, 361, 362, 623, 663
- Woodnutt, Hon. M., 154, 230, 231
- Woodcock, Sir G., 155
- Woods, Sir W., 65, 373
- World Bank, 66, 294, 299, 360
- World Health Organisation (WHO),
663
- Wraith, Prof. R. E., 226
- Wyncorr Ltd, 386
- Yacht marina project, 146, 383, 386
- Yeabsley, Sir R., 587, 588
- Yemen, 94, 121, 449, 470, 514
- Yorkshire Post, The*, 93, 95
- Yugoslavia, 367, 381, 445, 576
- Zahra, W. R., 131
- Zaltan, 525
- Zambia, 121, 654
- Zammit, Mrs E., 198
- Zammit, K., 251, 679
- Zanzibar, 19, 121, 180, 181, 208, 211,
242, 480, 549, 603, 604
- Zejtun, 55
- Zerafa, J., 56, 439, 440, 452, 469, 472
- Zomba, 653